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CAPTAIN DRING'S
RECOLLECTIONS OF
THE JERSEY PRISON-SHIP.



RECOLLECTIONS
OF
THE *JERSEY* PRISON-SHIP:

FROM THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPTS OF
CAPTAIN THOMAS DRING.
"

ONE OF THE PRISONERS.

By ALBERT G. GREENE.

EDITED BY HENRY B. DAWSON.



MORRISANIA, N. Y.

1865.

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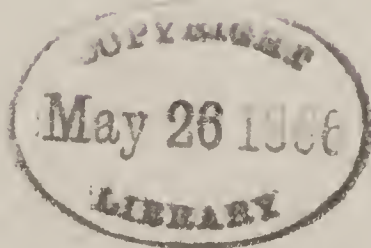
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TO

HENRY T. DROWNE, Esq.,

OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK,

A WORTHY "SON OF RHODE-ISLAND,"

IN ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF HIS CONSTANT READINESS TO PROMOTE EVERY
HISTORICAL INQUIRY, AND AS A MEMENTO OF THE HIGHEST
PERSONAL REGARD,

The following Record

OF THE PATRIOTIC SUFFERINGS OF OTHER AND EARLIER MEMBERS
OF THAT STATE

IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED BY HIS FRIEND,

THE EDITOR.

MORRISANIA, N. Y., *June*, 1865.

ADVERTISEMENT.

IN the following pages have been reproduced the "*Recollections*" of Captain THOMAS DRING, one of those who, in 1782, experienced some of the outrages to which the prisoners on board the *Jersey* Prison-ship were unquestionably exposed.

Of the character of these "*Recollections*," and that of their author, little need be said, so well established have both become in the opinions of those who are acquainted with them.

A frank, out-spoken, and honest seaman, the author of this little work had no disposition either to conceal the truth or to misrepresent it. His "*Recollections*," therefore, are entitled to that respect which they have always commanded; and the practised pen of ALBERT G. GREENE, Esq., subsequently the President of the Rhode Island Historical Society, by whom they were originally prepared for the Press, has added fresh attractions to what, without that, would have commanded our most earnest attention.

They appear to have been *originally* published in 1829, by H. H. BROWN, of Providence; and in 1831, a *second* edition was published by P. M. DAVIS, of the city of New York. What is supposed to be the *third* edition is now submitted to the world; embracing not only a careful reprint of the New York edition of 1831, but much addi-

tional matter which is illustrative of the subject, the greater part of which is either from the original manuscripts, and now first printed, or from contemporary publications which are not generally accessible, and therefore unknown to the greater portion of those who are interested in the subject; or, having been prepared expressly for this edition, which is now first introduced to the reading public.

Of the first-mentioned of these—that portion which is now first published from the original manuscripts—the correspondence of Mr. WILLIAM DROWNE, while he was a prisoner on board of the *Jersey*, and the memoranda of Mr. ROSWELL PALMER, written after his release, possess unusual interest and great value. The original portraits of Captains DRING and ABORN, also, form very interesting specimens of art, which, in this edition, have been introduced to the public the first time.

The reproductions from contemporary publications embrace the very interesting and very important correspondence between the prisoners themselves and JAMES RIVINGTON, the Royal Printer in New York, and the not less interesting and important enclosures which were brought to light by that correspondence—embracing the correspondence between General WASHINGTON and Admiral DIGBY; that between Commissaries DAVID SPROAT and ABRAHAM SKINNER; the very important Report on the condition of the Prisoners, which was made by a Committee of American officers; and the equally important address, on the same subject, of the officers themselves.

Of the original matter prepared especially for this edition, the sketch of the life of Mr. WILLIAM DROWNE, a prisoner, by his grand-nephew, Rev. T. STAFFORD DROWNE, of Brooklyn, New York; the grateful tribute to the memory

of Mr. ROSWELL PALMER, also a prisoner, by his son, WILLIAM PITT PALMER, whose ready pen has also produced the elegant sonnet at the close of the volume; and the appropriate sonnet on *The Rhode Island Prisoner*, which has been contributed by Mr. GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS, are most noticeable, and those which will prove most attractive to the general reader. The Introductory article, the various notes throughout the volume, the sketches, in the Appendix, of the lives of Captain DANIEL ABORN and Sailing-master SYLVESTER RHODES, and those of the ship *Belisarius*, the *Old Jersey*, and the schooner *Chance*, also in the Appendix, for all of which I alone am responsible, may be usefully referred to by those who desire to understand the subject.

The pictorial illustrations of this edition are also peculiar, and merit a passing notice.

In addition to the view of the *Jersey*, and the plans of her decks, which have been reproduced from the drawings left by Captain DRING, and copied into both the editions of the "*Recollections*" which have preceded this, authentic portraits of Captains DRING and ABORN have now been first published, from original contemporary portraits in the possession of the respective families.

These portraits have been reproduced, by photography, in a form which is peculiarly suitable for the purpose of illustration,—the first instance, it is believed, in which sheets of such sizes as are necessary for insertion in the different editions of this volume, have been produced with so much success;—and I am indebted to the very superior professional skill of Mr. R. A. LEWIS, No. 160 Chatham street, New York, for this notable triumph of art.

The only remaining duty which devolves upon me is to acknowledge the heavy obligations which I am under to

Mr. HENRY B. DROWNE, Mrs. GEORGE C. ARNOLD, Miss MARY HENRIETTA ABORN, and Mr. HENRY W. LOTHIOP, all of Providence, Rhode Island ; to Rev. T. STAFFORD DROWNE, of Brooklyn, New York, and to Mr. HENRY T. DROWNE and Mr. ROBERT W. ABORN, of the city of New York, for assistance kindly and freely rendered in obtaining information for my use ; to Rev. T. STAFFORD DROWNE, and Messrs. WILLIAM PITT PALMER and GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS, for the very acceptable literary contributions with which the volume has been enriched ; and to Mr. THOMAS DRING GLADDING, of Providence, a nephew of Captain DRING, and to Mr. ROBERT W. ABORN, of the city of New York, a grandson of Captain ABORN, for the use of the original portraits of their respective friends, for the purpose of illustrating this edition of the "*Recollections*" of their common sufferings : to each of whom I return my sincere thanks.

HENRY B. DAWSON.

Morrisania, N. Y., June, 1865.

INTRODUCTION.

THE sufferings of the American naval prisoners who were confined in the hulks during the war of the American Revolution have furnished to many a paragraph its most appalling sentences, although there are few subjects concerning which so little is generally known.

Of the multitudes who were thus confined, the greater proportion is said to have fallen, while they were yet prisoners, by disease, superinduced by the hardships which they then endured; while those who survived, generally appear to have confined their communications on the subject to the occasional winter-evening recital of some of their sufferings, for the entertainment of those who had gathered around their hearthstones, without considering that those who were to take their places would feel the least interest in the subject, or institute the least inquiry concerning it. A few, more considerate than the great body of their fellow-prisoners, have left behind them brief records of their recollections; and to these narratives—often intermingled with matter which is foreign to the main subject, and always very limited in extent—we are indebted for the greater part of the information which we possess concerning the Prison-ships and their victims.

The principal of these narratives are those of Captain THOMAS DRING and the Reverend THOMAS ANDROS; those which are less extended include the letter of Captain ALEXANDER COFFIN, Junior, to Doctor SAMUEL L. MITCHILL; the incidental "*Recollections*" of General JEREMIAH JOHNSON, of Brooklyn; the equally incidental paragraphs of the Reverend ANDREW SHERBURNE, EBENEZER FOX, Commodore SILAS TALBOT, &c.; and the memoranda and letters, yet in manuscript, of WILLIAM DROWNE, ROSWELL PALMER, etc.

Concerning the questions involved in these published narratives and unpublished papers, the great body of the inhabitants of the United States who profess to have any knowledge of the subject, perfectly agree in opinion; and nothing has been done, by those who have preceded me, either to correct what, in that opinion, is erroneous, or to confirm what appears, on the evidence of those who had personal knowledge on the subject, to be indisputably true.

Of the Prison-ships themselves, and the right of the enemy, under the Law of Nations and the usages of war, to use them as they were then used, a very brief notice may not be considered inappropriate.

The *Prison-ships*, as is very well known, were old vessels-of-war which had been condemned as unseaworthy, and unfit for store or Hospital ships, and converted to this, the last use to which they could be applied. They were necessarily uncomfortable, unless adapted by extensive alterations to their new purposes; and when it shall be remembered that they generally leaked badly, their unfitness as places of confinement, under ordinary circumstances, need not be a matter of any doubt.

The abstract right of the enemy to use these vessels as places of confinement is also unquestionable;—a contrary

opinion was not advanced during the period of the severest sufferings on board the *Jersey*, even by the prisoners themselves; nor has it been denied, as far as I have seen the discussions, by any of the more recent writers on the subject.¹

It is very well known that, by the fundamental law, not only all captives taken in a *solemn* war, but their posterity also, are, by the Law of Nations, absolutely slaves; and that whatsoever is done unto them is unpunishable.²

It is nevertheless true, that the right which war gives over the persons and lives of an enemy has practically its bounds; and that, by common consent, there are measures to be observed in war which cannot be innocently neglected, although a disregard of them continues to be unpunishable.

Every thing which becomes necessary to secure the ends of the war is permitted, and no more. The written law, surrounded by precedents, is stern and unyielding; yet there is a “law of humanity”—a higher law than that of man’s enactment—which fixes bounds to the abstract rights which the former has established, and directs us to

¹ The following contemporary notice will show that Prison-ships were employed by the Americans, during the War of the Revolution—furnishing a bar to our pretensions, were we disposed to make any, that the employment of these vessels was contrary to the Law of Nations:—

[From *The Pennsylvania Packet or, The General Advertiser*, Vol. XI, Numb. 896, Philadelphia, Tuesday, June 11, 1782.]

“NEW - LONDON, May 24.

“Last Saturday the Retaliation prison-ship was safely moored in the river Thames, about a mile above the ferry, for the reception of such British prisoners as may fall into our hands; since which about one hundred prisoners have been put on board.”

² GROTIUS’S *Rights of War and Peace*, Book III., Chapter vii., Sections i.-iii. (Edit. 1682, 481, 482.)

consider not only whether any particular act may, without injury to ourselves, be *legally* committed against an enemy, but, also, whether they are worthy of a humane or generous conqueror. By that unwritten law, so far as our own defence and future security will permit, we must moderate the evils we inflict upon an enemy, by the principles of humanity.¹

In an examination of the questions arising from the narratives of the captive Americans who were confined on board the Prison-ships in the *Wale bogt*, it must not be forgotten that their claims for consideration, under the Law of Nations, were not as great as those of captives taken in solemn war. They were, at best, only rebellious subjects of the legal sovereign of the land, who had risen against his authority, and been taken in the act. In short, they were, legally, traitors, and as such liable to the punishment and contempt which legitimately belong to that peculiar class of offenders—a class which, despite the law and the Government, generally enjoys the sympathies of the disinterested world, and is more or less purged of its crime by the extent of its success in the establishment of its demands.

As has been said, the abstract right of the enemy, under the Law of Nations, to employ such depositories as the *Jersey* and *Good Hope* for the confinement of American prisoners, is unquestionable; the manner in which that right was exercised, the extent and character of the evils which were there inflicted on the captives, and the necessity which existed for the imposition of any, or the greater number, of those evils, are questions in which the law of humanity—by common consent, also practically, a Law of

¹ BURLAMAQUI'S *Principles of Natural and Politic Law*, Politic Law, Part IV., Chapter v., Section vii. (Edit. 1784, 275.)

Nations—should have been, and still may be, consulted and recognized.

That there was any existing necessity for a resort to the extreme measures which were adopted and practised in connection with the American naval prisoners, was not then pretended, nor is it now. The great end of the war—the suppression of the rebellion in the Colonies—did not require the exercise of any such severity as that which these prisoners experienced; and those who exercised it, therefore, rendered themselves obnoxious to that higher law, the law of humanity, to which reference has been made.

The *Jersey*, although no longer serviceable as a vessel of war, might have been made comparatively comfortable as a habitation for a large number of occupants; and it would have been no difficult matter, with ordinary attention, to have protected the health of the prisoners who were ordinarily confined on board of her. She had been accustomed to carry a crew of upwards of four hundred persons,¹ with full supplies of stores and provisions, and with her heavy equipment as a ship-of-the-line; dismantled and at anchor, in an inner harbor, without equipments, stores, or provisions, a thousand need not have been exposed to hardships on board of her, had her officers and commissaries discharged their several duties with fidelity and energy.

It may be asked, then, what reason existed for any of the abuses which the prisoners on the *Jersey* experienced, and on whom can the criminality of those outrages which were then committed most properly fall?

There is little doubt that the superior officers of the Royal Navy, under whose exclusive jurisdictions were

¹ Official list of ships in commission, and their disposition, 12th July, 1762.

these Prison-ships, intended to insure, as far as possible, the good health of those who were confined on board of them; there is just as little doubt, however, that the inferior officers, under whose control those prisoners were more immediately placed,—like similar persons in similar situations in every age and nation of the world,—too often frustrated the purposes of their superior officers, and too often disgraced humanity, by their wilful disregard of the policy of their Government, and of the orders of their superiors; by the uncalled-for severity of their treatment of those who were placed in their custody; and by their shameless malappropriation of the means of support which were placed in their hands for the sustenance of the prisoners.

The prisoners themselves, without doubt, also promoted their own miseries, in many cases; and, too often, they unnecessarily intensified the discomfort into which they had been plunged by the fortune of war, and the negligence or wickedness of those who were their Commissaries and Guards.

The leakage of the *Jersey* imposed the necessity of a very frequent use of her pumps, to “prevent her from sinking”—if a further settlement into the soft mud of the Wale bogt could be thus prevented;—yet we learn from Rev. THOMAS ANDROS, a prisoner on board, that it was necessary to employ an armed guard in the well-room, to force the prisoners to the winches, and to keep the pumps in motion;¹ while the same authority states, that “the prisoners were “furnished with buckets and brushes to cleanse the ship, “and with vinegar to sprinkle her inside; *but their indolence and despair were such that they would not use them, “or but rarely.*”²

¹ The *Old Jersey Captive*, 9.

² Ibid., 16.

In this connection it is proper for me to say, that I am not insensible of the fact, that the truth of many of the statements concerning the *Old Jersey* and her captive victims has been denied; and that a Committee appointed by the American officers who were permitted to reside on shore, to investigate the subject, made a written Report, confirming that denial,¹ which was published in both the *Loyal* and the *Patriotic Press* of the day. It is also true that a similar statement, signed by the great body of the officers referred to, among whom were Captain ABORN and Doctor BOWEN, of the *Chance*² (the sufferings of whose crew are detailed in the following pages), was also published, and gave color to the denial to which reference has been made.

The correspondence of Mr. WILLIAM DROWNE, now first published, also shows that there were instances in which the prisoners were treated with more consideration than is generally supposed.

Friends who were residents of the city of New York and its vicinity were permitted to visit the prisoners, and furnish them with such articles as promoted their comfort;³ some evidence of respect for the memory of the dead was sometimes allowed to be shown at their burial; when desired, even the reading of the funeral service was not interfered with;⁴ correspondence with their families, by letter, was allowed,⁵ and the prisoners were even permitted to visit their families, in distant States, on their simple word of honor, to return to captivity within a specified time.⁶

¹ Appendix I., Number 7 (page 143, *post*).

² Appendix I., Number 7, pages 143-145, *post*.

³ WILLIAM DROWNE, page 173.

⁴ Page 171, *post*.

⁵ Pages 168-173, *post*.

⁶ Page 168, *post*.

The simple narrative of Mr. ROSWELL PALMER, in like manner, disposes of the story that the gratings of the hatchways were peremptorily fastened down at sunset ; and that all communication between the lower and the upper decks was then positively closed until the following morning.¹

These, and other similar authorities, indicate that the outrages committed on the unfortunate prisoners were not systematic and authoritative, although they were equally severe in their effects on their victims, and even more difficult of remedy. On the contrary, there is little doubt that they were the result, generally, of the avarice of those who supplied the ship with its stores ; the indolence or complicity with the contractors, or both, of those who should have inspected the supplies which those contractors furnished ; and the general indifference which prevailed concerning the health or comfort of the prisoners—an indifference which was often induced by the relative positions of a King's servant and "a rebel," and promoted by a division of accountability between the Commissary of Prisoners and the officers of the ship. To these may be added the indolence and occasional bad temper of the Cook—an officer whose position was by no means an enviable one, yet one on which depended, to a greater extent than most others, the health and comfort of the prisoners ; the surliness of the Marine who guarded the water-cask, and was empowered to drive from it all whom he was disposed to punish, or indisposed to favor,—an infliction which might add materially to the horrors which were legitimately the result of a confinement in such a prison, at such a time as that ; and the incompetence or negligence of the Surgeon, whose duty it was, although too often neglected, to visit the sick,

¹ Page 176, *post*.

and to provide for their necessities. The Guards, also—as is generally the case with those who possess the power to oppress those who are helpless—were not always obliging, nor even civil; while the prisoners themselves, as we have been told by many, were indolent to an alarming extent, disposed to annoy their warders, and to taunt their guards; given to gambling—in order, it may be, “to kill time,”—and not indisposed to steal from each other, whenever they found an opportunity to do so without detection.

In the midst of such a densely populated community as this, rigidly, if not relentlessly, guarded by an irresponsible soldiery, who were anxiously looking for an opportunity to revenge a series of petty insults; with Surgeons whose love of ease was irresistible, and Cooks who had been taught, by observation of the conduct of their superiors in office, that the comfort and sanitary condition of the prisoners were matters of little consequence;—in the midst of such a community, nearly every member of which was diseased and dispirited, poverty-stricken, and apparently deserted by his friends and country, let the small-pox and yellow fever appear, with all their accumulated woes, and a fair picture of the *Jersey* and her victims, during the summer of 1782, may be seen and understood.

It has been often said, and as often believed, that these naval prisoners, the victims of war, were neglected by their country, and allowed to perish when they might properly have been saved; but an examination of the contemporary records affords no evidence of the truth of those remarks.

The terms of the agreement which had been made between the belligerents, did not allow either party to demand an exchange of any of these prisoners, as exchanges were to be made in kind, and the Americans had few *naval* pris-

oners to offer for them ; while the acceptance of the enemy's offer to receive soldiers in exchange, by furnishing him with immediate re-enforcements in the field, would have been destructive of the best interests of the United States.

But other and more important reasons than this retarded the release of the greater number of the prisoners who were confined on board of the *Jersey*.

They were the crews of privateers, not those of vessels in the service of the Continent ; and the owners of the vessels, rather than the Continental Congress, were the parties to whom they could most properly apply for relief. As the prisoners who were captured by that class of vessels were seldom detained, there was no fund on which to draw for seamen who could be offered for exchange ; nor was there any power to prevent a continuation of the difficulty, or to enforce on those owners an observance of their duty to their employés who were in distress.

Another difficulty arose from the limited authority which General WASHINGTON possessed in the premises. The authority to exchange Naval Prisoners was not vested in him, but in the Financier ; and, as the prisoners on the *Jersey* fully set forth in their petition,¹ the former was comparatively helpless in the premises, although he earnestly desired to relieve them from their sufferings.

It will be seen, from these circumstances, that no blame could properly attach either to General WASHINGTON, or the Continental Congress, or the Commissary of Prisoners, on this subject ; and that the blame belonged properly to those who were most nearly interested in the subject—those who were engaged in privateering—all of whom had been accustomed either to release, without parole, the crews of

¹ Vide page 103, *post*.

the vessels which they captured, or enlist them on other privateers; in both cases removing the very means by which alone the release of their captive fellow-seamen could be properly and safely effected.

All this, however, is collateral, and immaterial to the main questions involved in the inquiry.

From the careful perusal of all the information which we possess on this interesting subject, the reader will arise with the conviction that, by unwarrantable abuses of authority, and unprincipled disregard of the purposes of the British Government in some of its agents, great numbers of helpless American prisoners were wantonly plunged into the deepest distress, exposed to the most severe sufferings, and carried to unhonored graves. He need not stop to inquire by what particular officer, or in what particular manner, or with what intent, expressed or implied, these results were brought about; nor need he be anxious to learn whether or not *all* the horrors of the oft-told story, rather than the greater part of them, are entirely and literally true. Enough will remain uncontradicted by competent testimony to brand with everlasting infamy all who were immediately concerned in the business; and to bring a blush of shame on the cheek of every one who feels the least interest in the memory of any one who, no matter how remotely, was a party to so mean, and yet so horrible an outrage.

Whether it was *necessary*, in order to suppress the rebellion in the Colonies, and to restore the supremacy of the laws and the authority of the Sovereign—the end and purpose of the war—that these captives should be thus maltreated on board the *Jersey*, and other Prison-ships in the Wale bogt and elsewhere; thus denied the necessaries of

life; thus brutalized and treated worse than brutes, is the question on which all others depend—that which determines the legality, under the Laws of Nations, of the conduct of those who had the custody of the prisoners.

On this subject, also, there cannot be two opinions; indeed it was never claimed by any one, either officially or otherwise, that any such necessity existed; it was not even pretended that the use of Prison-ships, rather than the broad acres of unoccupied lands which were within a stone's-throw of the Prison-ships themselves, as depositories of captive mariners, was either necessary for the great ends and purposes referred to, or any other.

There was no such existing necessity; and the authors and abettors of the outrages to which reference has been made will stand convicted, not only of the most heartless criminality against the laws of humanity and the laws of God, but of the most flagrant violation of the Laws of Nations and of the Law of the Land.

H. B. D.

Morrisania, N. Y., June, 1865.

RECOLLECTIONS
OF THE
JERSEY PRISON-SHIP:

TAKEN, AND PREPARED FOR PUBLICATION, FROM THE
ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT OF
THE LATE

CAPTAIN THOMAS DRING,

OF PROVIDENCE, R. I.,

ONE OF THE PRISONERS.

BY ALBERT G. GREENE.

“It was there, that hunger and thirst and disease, and all the contumely which cold-hearted cruelty could bestow, sharpened every pang of death. Misery there wrung every fibre that could feel, before she gave the blow of grace, which sent the sufferer to eternity.”—*Russell's Oration.*



New-York:

PUBLISHED BY P. M. DAVIS.

.....

1831.

P R E F A C E.

IN presenting the following narrative to the public, it is deemed proper that it should be accompanied with a brief notice of the individual, from whose memory these *Recollections* were drawn; and with some account of the materials left by him, from which this work has been compiled.

Excepting the events described in this volume, his biography would afford but few incidents of sufficient importance to excite public attention. The prime of his life was spent in active employment upon the ocean, and his remaining years were passed in the avocations of the quiet and industrious citizen. The events of the latter yield no themes for comment; and the former, although not without its scenes of peril and adventure, affords nothing which here requires to be recorded.

Captain THOMAS DRING was born in the town of Newport (R. I.), on the third day of August, 1758. He was therefore in his twenty-fifth year when the events occurred which form the subject of the present volume.

After the termination of his confinement on board the *Jersey*, he entered the merchant service, and soon attained the command of a ship. He sailed from the port of Providence for many years, and was well known as an able and experienced officer. In the year 1803, he retired from his nautical profession, and, soon after, established himself in business in Providence, where he resided during the remainder of his life. He died on the eighth day of August, 1825, aged sixty-seven years, leaving many by whom his memory will long be preserved, as a kind relative, an intelligent and industrious citizen, a worthy and an honest man.

The original manuscript, from which the facts contained in the following pages have been taken, was written in the year 1824. Although it was finished but a few months previous to his decease, his faculties were then perfect and unimpaired, and his memory remained clear and unclouded, even in regard to the most minute facts. To those who were personally acquainted with Captain DRING, his character affords sufficient assurance of the correctness of his narrative.

His manuscript is a closely-written folio of about sixty pages, containing a great number of interesting facts, thrown together without much regard to style, or to chronological order. Not being intended for publication, at least in the form in which he left it, he appears to have bestowed but little regard on the language in which his facts were described, or on the arrangement or connection in which they were placed. His only aim, indeed, appears to have been to commit

faithfully to paper his recollections of all the principal events which transpired during his own confinement, and the material circumstances in relation to the general treatment of the prisoners. His writing, accordingly, abounds with repetitions of not only the most important, but even of the most minute occurrences. These, although they add value to a manuscript like his, proving the strength and accuracy of his memory, by the perfect accordance of his descriptions of the same facts, made at different times, still, in a published book, they could be viewed but as useless redundancies, at least.

The manuscript has been sought for, and eagerly perused, by several gentlemen of high respectability, who were either prisoners on board the *Jersey*, or placed in situations where they had ample opportunities of being acquainted with the facts. They have uniformly borne testimony to the correctness of its details; but have been, at the same time, unanimous in the opinion that a perfect and complete revision of its style and arrangement was absolutely required.

It was, in fact, necessary that the work should not merely be revised, but rewritten, before its publication. To do this in a proper manner, was no easy task. It was necessary to divide the narrative into distinct and separate chapters, and, consequently, to transpose and connect detached facts under their proper heads, in order to produce a degree of uniformity in the whole. But while the circumstances not only allowed, but required, full liberty to be taken with the language

and arrangement of the narrative, still, nothing has been added, and no fact or occurrence of the least importance has been omitted. Throughout the whole work, the most scrupulous care has been taken that the incidents, as here portrayed, should exactly agree with the descriptions of Captain DRING ; and, also, that they should be so set forth as to appear neither of more nor less importance than he appears to have attached to them, while writing his manuscript.

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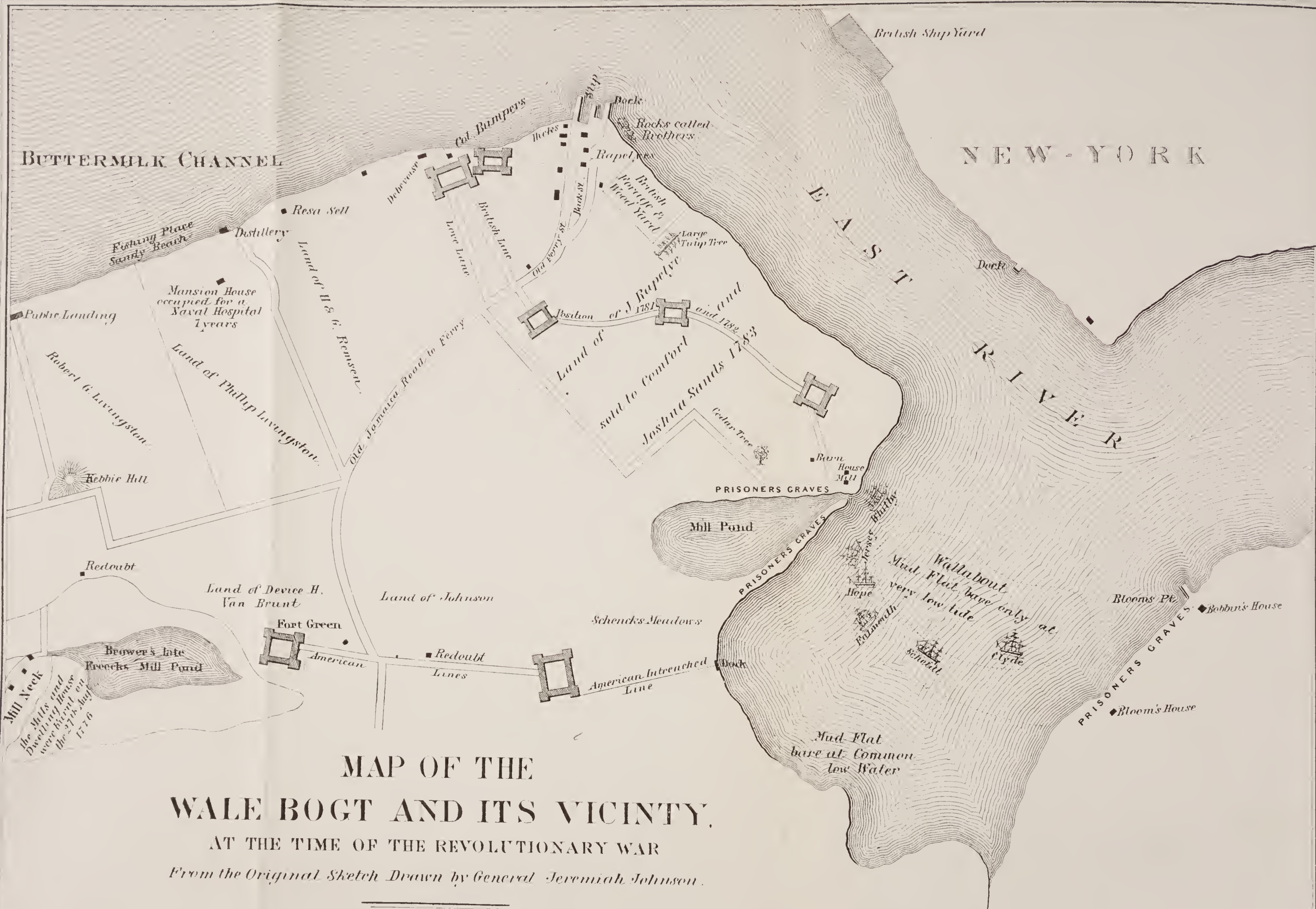
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NOTE.

It may be proper to mention, that the Engravings which accompany this volume are copied from an original sketch, made by Captain DRING, and attached to his Manuscript. The References are given almost in his own words.

THE
JERSEY PRISON-SHIP.



MAP OF THE WALE BOGT AND ITS VICINTY,

AT THE TIME OF THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR

From the Original Sketch Drawn by General Jeremiah Johnson.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION
OF THE
JERSEY PRISON-SHIP,
WITH REFERENCES TO THE PLATES.

THE *Jersey* was originally a British ship-of-the-line. She was rated and registered as a sixty-four gun ship, but had usually mounted seventy-four guns.¹ At the commencement of the American Revolution, being an old vessel, and proving to be much decayed, she was entirely dismantled; and, soon after, was moored in the East River at New York, and converted into a Store-ship.² In the year 1780, she was fitted as a Prison-ship,³ and was used for that pur-

¹ The *Jersey*, according to the records of the Royal Navy, was a fourth-rate ship, rating sixty guns; from which it appears that both Captains DRING and COFFIN and Rev. THOMAS ANDROS were slightly mistaken concerning her former strength, which they supposed to have been sixty-four guns—a third-rate ship.

Mr. FOX (*Revolutionary Adventures*, p. 96) supposed she was an old *seventy-four*—a wider departure from correctness than the statements of his fellow-sufferers.

² This is proved to be a correct statement by the notices of her use as a *Store-ship*, from time to time, in the city papers of that period.

³ Judge FURMAN, in his *Notes, Geographical and Historical, relating to the town*

pose during the remainder of the war. Fears having been very naturally felt that the destructive contagion by which so many of her unfortunate inmates had been swept away, might spread to the shore, she was, in consequence,¹ removed, and moored, with chain cables, at the Wale bogt, a solitary and unfrequented place on the shore of Long Island.² She had been dismantled, and her rudder unhung. Her only spars were the bowsprit, a derrick for taking in

of Brooklyn (page 53); General JEREMIAH JOHNSON, in his *Recollections of Brooklyn and New York in 1776*, and Mr. TAYLOR, in his *Martyrs to the Revolution* (page 13), state that the *Jersey* was anchored in April, 1778, in the Wale bogt, for the reception of prisoners, but there is reason to suppose that they were in error in the statements referred to.

Captain DRING stated in the text, in which Mr. FOX concurred (*Adventures*, 96), that she was not fitted for a *Prison-ship* until 1780; while GAINES'S *Universal Register: or American and British Kalendar for the year 1782*, published in the City of New York in the latter part of 1781, refers to the *Jersey*, in the "LIST OF KING'S SHIPS NOW IN COMMISSION," as follows:—

"FOURTH RATES
* * * *
"60. Jersey (Hos. ship),"

which indicates that as late as the close of 1781 she was used only as a "*Hospital-ship*." Besides, the narratives of Captains DRING and COFFIN, Rev. Messrs. ANDROS and SHERBURNE, and Messrs. FOX, DROWNE, and PALMER, all speak of their confinement in *that* ship as having occurred in the latter part of 1781, and subsequently—all of which is evidence of the correctness of the *Kalendar* and the incorrectness of Messrs. FURMAN, JOHNSON, and TAYLOR.

¹ See, also, FOX'S *Revolutionary Adventures*, 96.

² Mr. ANDROS states, "she was moored about three-quarters of a mile to the eastward of Brooklyn ferry, near a tide-mill on the Long-Island shore. The nearest distance to land was about twenty rods" (*The Old Jersey Captive*, 8);—a statement which has been confirmed by General JOHNSON, in the *Map* which he made of the Wale bogt, a copy of which forms one of the illustrations of this volume.

supplies of water, etc., and a flag-staff at the stern. Her port-holes had all been closed and strongly fastened; and two tiers of small holes cut through her sides. These holes were about ten feet apart, each being about twenty inches square, and guarded by two strong bars of iron, crossing it at right angles, thus leaving four contracted spaces, which admitted light by day, and served as breathing-holes at night.¹ The interior construction and arrangement of the ship will be clearly understood by an examination of the Engravings, illustrated by the following references.

¹ The exterior of the *Jersey* has been described also by Captain COFFIN, in his *Letter to Doctor SAMUEL L. MITCHILL* (Appendix VI.); by EBENEZER FOX, in his *Revolutionary Adventures*, 96, 97; by Rev. THOMAS ANDROS, in his *Old Jersey Captive*, 8, etc.

REFERENCES TO THE PLATES.

FIGURE 1.—EXTERIOR VIEW OF THE SHIP.

1. The Flag-staff, which was seldom used, and only for signals.
2. A canvas awning or tent, used by the guards in warm weather.
3. The Quarter-deck, with its barricado about ten feet high, with a door and loop-holes on each side.
4. The Ship's Officers' Cabin, under the Quarter-deck.
5. Accommodation-ladder, on the starboard side, for the use of the ship's officers.
6. The Steerage, occupied by the sailors belonging to the ship.
7. The Cook-room for the ship's crew and guards.
8. The Sutler's-room, where articles were sold to the prisoners, and delivered to them through an opening in the bulkhead.
9. The Upper-deck and Spar-deck, where the prisoners were occasionally allowed to walk.
10. The Gangway-ladder, on the larboard side, for the prisoners.
11. The Derrick, on the starboard side, for taking in water, etc., etc.
12. The Galley, or Great Copper, under the forecastle, where the provisions were cooked for the prisoners.
13. The Gun-room, occupied by those prisoners who were officers.
- 14, 15. Hatchways leading below, where the prisoners were confined.
- 17, 18. Between-decks, where the prisoners were confined by night.
19. The Bowsprit.
20. Chain Cables, by which the ship was moored.



FIG. 1. EXTERIOR VIEW OF THE SHIP

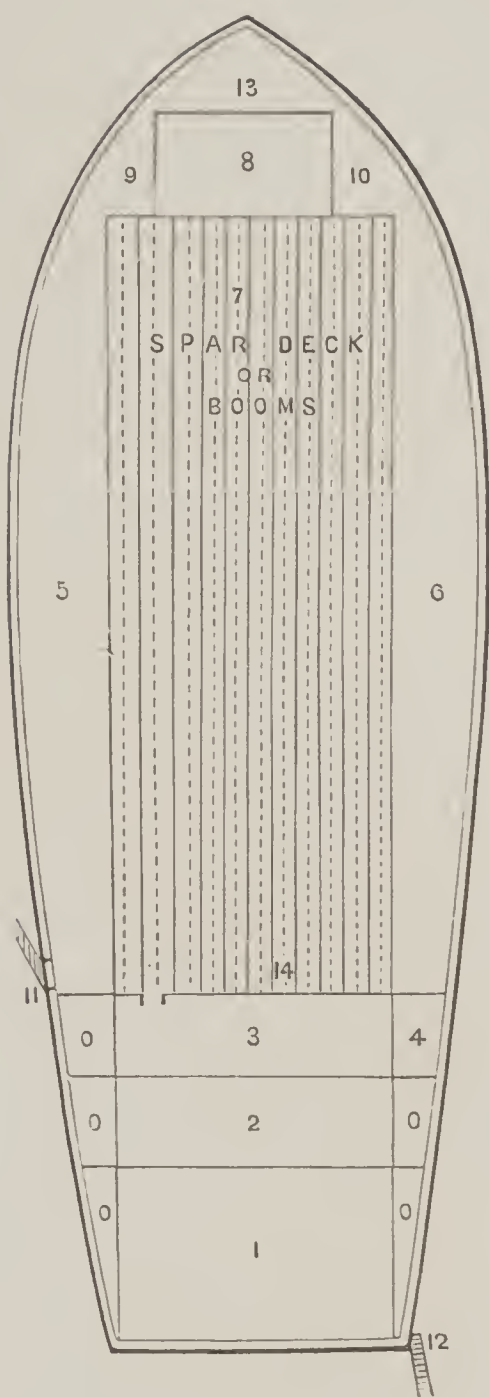


FIG. 2. THE GUN-DECK WITH ITS APARTMENTS.

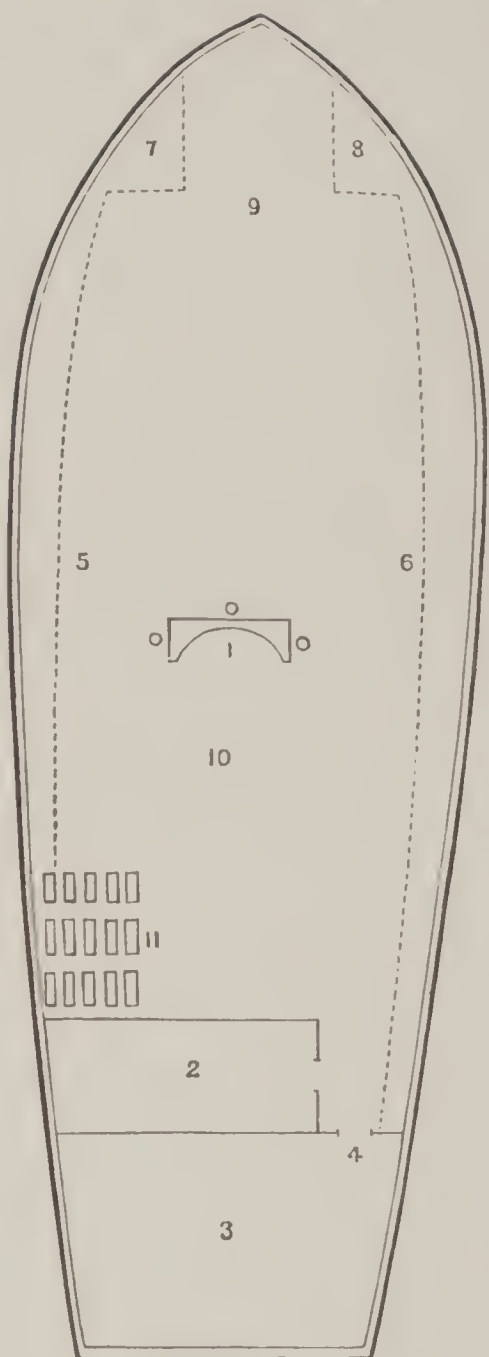
FIGURE 2.—THE GUN-DECK, WITH ITS APARTMENTS.

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Cabin. | 8. The Galley. |
| 2. Steerage. | 9, 10. The Cook's-quarters. |
| 3. Cook-room. | 11. The Gangway-ladder. |
| 4. Sutler's room. | 12. The Officer's Ladder. |
| 5, 6. Gangways. | 13. Working-party. |
| 7. The Booms. | 14. The Barricado. |
- 0 0 0. Store Rooms.

FIGURE 3.—THE UPPER-DECK, BETWEEN DECKS.

1. The Hatchway-ladder, leading to the lower deck, railed round on three sides.
2. The Steward's room, from which the prisoners received their daily allowance through an opening in the partition.
3. The Gun-room, occupied by those prisoners who were officers.
4. Door of the Gun-room.
- 5, 6, 7, 8. The arrangement of the prisoners' chests and boxes, which were ranged along, about ten feet from the sides of the ship, leaving a vacant space, where the messes assembled.
- 9, 10. The middle of the deck, where many of the prisoners' hammocks were hung at night, but always taken down in the morning, to afford room for walking.
11. Bunks, on the larboard side of the deck, for the reception of the sick.

FIG. 3. THE UPPER DECK, BETWEEN DECKS.



RECOLLECTIONS, ETC.

CHAPTER I.

OUR CAPTURE.

“ The various horrors of these hulks to tell,
“ Where want and woe, where pain and penance dwell;
“ Where Death in tenfold vengeance holds his reign,
“ And injured ghosts, yet unavenged, complain;
“ This be my task.”

FRENEAU.

AMONG the varied events of the war of the American Revolution, there are few circumstances which have left a deeper impression on the public mind than those connected with the cruel and vindictive treatment which was experienced by those of our unfortunate countrymen whom the fortune of war had placed on board the Prison-ships of the enemy. Still, among the vague and indistinct narrations which have been made (although, in almost every instance, falling short of the dreadful reality), but few statements have been given to the world in an authentic form; and these have been for the most part relations of detached facts and circumstances, rather than such distinct and connected accounts as might afford the reader a correct view of all the important facts in relation to the subject.

Indeed, most of those who have spoken, and who could have written of these facts with the fidelity of eye-wit-

nesses, have already passed beyond the scenes of earth; and, while living, had but slight inducements to devote the necessary time and labor to record the history of their former sufferings.

Hence, so little that is authentic has ever been published upon the subject, and so scanty are the materials for information respecting it, which have as yet been given to the rising generations of our country, that it has already become a matter of doubt, even among many of the intelligent and well-informed of our young citizens, whether the tales of the Prison-ships, such as they have been told, have not been exaggerated beyond the reality. They have not been exaggerated. Much of the truth has indeed been told; but not one-half the detail of its horrors has ever been portrayed.

But the period has now arrived which requires that some authentic record should be made, in order that the truth of these events shall not remain a subject of doubt and uncertainty. And so few of those who suffered in these terrific abodes remain alive, that, as a matter of precaution, it seems to be required that some one possessing actual knowledge of the facts, should embody them in a form more permanent than the tales of tradition, and more detailed than can appear on the page of the general historian.

All the important occurrences of that eventful period; all which conspired to give its peculiar character to the lengthened contest, or which had an effect in advancing or retarding its issue; every thing which tends to show the spirit with which it was conducted on either side, is certainly worthy of record and of remembrance. In this light, I view the facts in relation to the treatment of the

American seamen on board the British Prison-ships. These facts are a portion of our country's history; and that history would not be complete, one of its deepest lessons would be lost, were the page which bears the record of these facts to be obliterated.

The principal motive of the writer of the following pages, in recording the facts which they contain, was originally to strengthen his recollection of the particulars relative to the events which he has described. Although nearly half a century has elapsed since these events occurred, yet so indelible was the impression which they left on his mind, that they seem in all their details but as the things of yesterday; and if memory remains to him, they will go with him, in all their freshness, to the grave.

In a very short time, there will be not one being on the face of the earth who can, from his own knowledge, relate this tale; though many still live who, although not among the sufferers, yet well know the truth of the circumstances which I have written.

The number of those who perished on board the Prison and Hospital-ships at the Wale bogt has never been, and never can be known. It has been ascertained, however, with as much precision as the nature of the case will admit, that more than TEN THOUSAND died on board the *Jersey*, and the Hospital-ships *Scorpion*, *Strombolo*, and *Hunter*. Thousands there suffered, and pined, and died, whose names have never been known by their countrymen. They died where no eye could admire their fortitude, no tongue could praise their devotion to their country's cause.¹

For years, the very name of "*The Old Jersey*" seemed

¹ General JOHNSON, who resided near the Wale bogt, for reasons assigned by him, inferred "that about eleven thousand five hundred perished in the

to strike a terror to the hearts of those whose necessities required them to venture upon the ocean; the mortality which prevailed on board her was well known throughout the country; and to be confined within her dungeons was considered equal to a sentence of death, from which but little hope of escape remained.

It was my hard fortune, in the course of the war, to be twice confined on board the Prison-ships of the enemy.

I was first immured in the year 1779, on board the *Good Hope*, then lying in the North River, opposite the city of New York; but after a confinement of more than four months, I succeeded in making my escape to the Jersey shore.¹ Afterwards, in the year 1782, I was again captured, and conveyed on board the *Jersey*, where for nearly

“Prison-ships” (*Recollections of Brooklyn and New York*, Appendix VII.), while the Rev. THOMAS ANDRÖS, who was a prisoner on board the *Jersey*, said: “It is computed that not less than eleven thousand American seamen perished in ‘her,’—probably intended for the aggregate on *all* the ships. (*The Old Jersey Captive*, 8.)

¹ Captain DRING’s name is not mentioned in the following extract; but it is said by Mr. ONDERDONK, in his *Revolutionary Incidents of Kings County* (p. 230), that he was one of the party. If that statement is true, this extract will be especially interesting:—

[From *The New-Jersey Journal*, Volume I., Number XXXV. Chatham, Tuesday, October 12, 1779.]

“Last Wednesday morning, about 1 o’clock, A. M., made their escape from the Goodhope prison ship, in the North-River, nine captains and two privates. Among the number was Capt. James Prince, who has been confined four months, and having no prospect of being exchanged, concerted a plan, in conjunction with the other gentlemen, to make their escape, which they effected in the following manner: They confined the mate, disarmed the centinels, and hoisted out the boat which was on deck; they brought off nine stands of arms, one pair of pistols, and a sufficient quantity of ammunition, being determined not to be taken alive. They had scarce got clear of the ship before the alarm was given, when they were fired on by three different ships, but fortunately no person was hurt. Capt. Prince speaks in the highest

five months I was a witness and a partaker of the unspeakable sufferings of that wretched class of American prisoners, who were there taught the utmost extent of human misery.¹

I am now far advanced in years, and am the only survivor (with the exception of two) of a crew of sixty-five men. I often pass some descendant of one of my old companions in captivity; and the recollection comes fresh to my mind, that his father was my comrade and fellow-sufferer in prison; that I saw him breathe his last upon the deck of the *Jersey*, and assisted at his interment at the Wale bogt; circumstances probably wholly unknown to the person, the sight of whom had excited the recollection.

In the month of May, 1782, I sailed from Providence, Rhode Island, as Master's-mate, on board a privateer called the *Chance*. This was a new vessel, on her first cruise. She was owned in Providence, by Messrs. CLARKE & NIGHTINGALE, and manned chiefly from that place and vicinity. She was commanded by Captain DANIEL ABORN,² mounted twelve six-pound cannon, and sailed with a complement of about sixty-five men. She was officered as follows, viz. :—

DANIEL ABORN, of Pawtuxet, R. I., . . . Commander.

JOHN TILLINGHAST,³ Providence, . . . First Lieutenant.

“ terms of Captain Charles Nelson, who commanded the prison ship, using the
“ prisoners with a great deal of humanity, in particular to himself.”

¹ It is evident that an error has been made in this portion of the narrative.

Captain DRING was captured in the middle of May, as he has related in the following page. As will be seen hereafter, he was released in the early part of July, after a confinement of less than *two* months.

² A biographical sketch of Captain DANIEL ABORN, Commander of the *Chance*, may be found in the Appendix, No. II.

³ Lieutenant TILLINGHAST survived his imprisonment; and returned to Rhode Island with his comrades, when they were exchanged. -

JAMES HAWKINS,	Pawtuxet,	. . .	Second Lieutenant.
SYLVESTER RHODES, ¹	do.	. . .	Sailing-master.
THOMAS DRING,	Providence,	. . .	Master's-mate.
JOSEPH BOWEN, ²	do.	. . .	Surgeon.
ROBERT CARVER, ³	do.	. . .	Gunner.
JOSEPH ARNOLD,	do.	. . .	Carpenter.
JOHN W. GLADDING,	do.	. . .	Prize-Master.

The names of several other officers, in inferior stations, I do not recollect at this distant period of time.

Our cruise was but a short one; for in a few days after sailing, we were captured by the British ship-of-war *Belisarius*, Captain GRAVES, of twenty-six guns.⁴ We were captured in the night; and our crew, having been conveyed on board the enemy's ship, were put in irons the next morning. During the next day, the *Belisarius* made two other prizes,—a privateer brig from New London or Stonington, Connecticut, called the *Samson*, of twelve guns, commanded by Captain BROOKS, and a merchant schooner⁵ from Warren, Rhode Island, commanded by Captain CHARLES COLLINS. The crews of these two vessels, except

¹ A biographical sketch of Sailing-master SYLVESTER RHODES, of the *Chance*, may be found in the Appendix, No. III.

² Doctor BOWEN, as will be seen in Chapter XXI., was one of the last three survivors of the luckless crew of the *Chance*—all who were living when this narrative was originally prepared for the press.

³ ROBERT CARVER's sickness, death, and burial have been narrated with so much feeling in Chapters VIII. and IX., that I need only refer the reader to the sad story which is there recorded.

⁴ The *Belisarius* was an American-built vessel belonging to Salem, which had been captured by the enemy in August, 1781, and subsequently employed as a cruiser against the Americans.

The history of this vessel being too extended for a foot-note, it has been transferred to the Appendix of this volume; and the reader is referred thereto (Appendix No. IX.) for information on that subject.

⁵ The *Swordfish*.

the principal officers, were also put in irons. These captures were all made on soundings south of Long Island. The putting their prisoners in irons was a necessary precaution on the part of the captors. We were kept confined in the cable tier of the ship, but were occasionally permitted to go on deck during the day, in small parties. The *Bellisarius*, then having on board upwards of one hundred and thirty prisoners, soon made her way for New York, in company with her prizes.¹

Our situation on board this ship was not, indeed, a very enviable one; but, uncomfortable as it was, it was far preferable to that in which we soon expected to be placed, and which we soon found it was our doom to experience.

¹ The following, from HUGH GAINES'S *New-York Gazette*, will interest the reader, and, at the same time, show the name of the "merchant schooner from "Warren," of which mention is made:—

[From the *New-York Gazette, and the Weekly Mercury*, No. 1596. New-York, Monday, May 20, 1782.]

"Prizes sent in since our last.

* * * * *

"Sloop Swordfish, Collins, from Warren, in Connecticut, for the West-Indies, with Lumber.

"Privateer Sloop Chance, of 12 Guns, and 60 Men, from Providence, Rhode Island. And

"The Samson of New London, (and not the Holker of Philadelphia, as mentioned in some of To-Day's Papers) by his Majesty's Ship Bellisarius, Thomas Graves, Esq; Commander."

* * * * *

The following, from RIVINGTON'S paper,—the official organ of the Royal authorities,—affords some additional information:—

[From the *Royal Gazette*, No. 589. New-York, Wednesday, May 22, 1782.]

"On Sunday last the privateer brig Sampson, belonging to New London, of 16 guns, and 120 men, was sent into this port by his Majesty's ship Bellisarius, Richard Graves, Esq; commander.

"It is said that Captain Graves has brought in upwards of 200 rebel prisoners."

The ship dropped her anchor abreast of the city, and signals were immediately made that she had prisoners on board. Soon after, two large gondolas or boats came alongside, in one of which was seated the notorious DAVID SPROAT, the Commissary of Prisoners. This man was an American refugee, universally detested for the cruelty of his conduct, and the insolence of his manners.¹

We were then called on deck, and having been released from our irons, were ordered into the boats. This being accomplished, we put off from the ship, under a guard of marines, and proceeded towards our much dreaded place of confinement, which was not then in sight. As we passed along the Long Island shore, against the tide, our progress was very slow. The prisoners were ordered by SPROAT to apply themselves to the oars; but not feeling any particular anxiety to expedite our progress, we declined obeying the command. His only reply was, "I'll soon fix you, my lads."

We at length doubled a point, and came in view of the Wale bogt,² where lay before us the black hulk of the *Old*

¹ DAVID SPROAT is said to have been a Scotchman, by birth.

While the British held possession of Philadelphia, in 1777-8, he was a "Vendue-master" in that city; and the advertisements of his very frequent sales, at the City Vendue-store, between Chestnut and Walnut streets, on the east side of Front street—his regular place of business—and in other places, show that his business was extensive and profitable.

When the enemy evacuated Philadelphia, in June, 1778, SPROAT, in common with many others of his class, also left that city, and repaired to New York—a Loyal Refugee and a hungry expectant of official favor.

He engaged in business, as a merchant, in the latter city, and, it is said, in June, 1779, he was appointed Commissary of Naval Prisoners—that office in which he became especially obnoxious to every American.

He died, it is said, in Kirkeudbright, Scotland, on the first of October, 1799, aged sixty-four years.

² Although it is not strictly in accordance with the legitimate purposes of a

Jersey, with her satellites, the three Hospital-ships; to which SPROAT pointed, in an exulting manner, and said: "There, Rebels, *there* is the *cage* for you." Oh! how I wished to be standing alone with that inhuman wretch upon the green turf at that moment!

As he spoke, my eye was instantly turned from the dreaded hulk; but a single glance had shown us a multitude of human beings moving upon her upper deck. Many were on her bowsprit, for the purpose, as I afterwards learned, of getting without the limits.

It was then nearly sunset, and before we were alongside, every man, except the sentinels on the gangway, had disappeared. Previous to their being sent below, some of the prisoners, seeing us approaching, waved their hats, as if they would say, "Approach us not," and we soon found fearful reason for the warning.

foot-note, the reader will probably pardon a passing allusion to the *name* of this very celebrated locality, now within the beautiful city of Brooklyn.

It has been shown, at least to *my* satisfaction, by that very competent Dutch scholar, S. ALOFSEN, Esq., of Jersey City (*Literary World*, No. 68, New York, May 20, 1848), that the locality in question was named by the Dutch soon after their arrival in this country, and previous to that of the Walloons; and that, in consequence, the latter could not have had any influence in the determination of the name.

It is also not less evident, from the same authority, that the *name* was taken, like that portion of the city of Amsterdam which bears the same name, from "EEN WAAL"—a basin of a harbor, an inner harbor, and "EEN BOGT"—a bend; and that, like the locality in Europe, it means, literally, what it is in fact, "The Bend of the Inner Harbor."

CHAPTER II.

THE FIRST NIGHT ON BOARD.

"Hail, dark abode! what can with thee compare—
 "Heat, sickness, famine, death, and stagnant air.
 "PANDORA'S box, from whence all mischiefs flow,
 "Here *real* found, torments mankind anew.
 "Swift, from the guarded decks, we rushed along,
 "And vainly sought repose, so vast our throng.
 "Three hundred wretches here, denied all light,
 "In crowded mansions, pass th' infernal night.
 "Some, for a bed their tatter'd vestments join;
 "And some on chests, and some on floors recline.
 "Shut from the blessings of the evening air,
 "Pensive we lay, with mingled corpses there,
 "Meagre and wan, and scorched with heat below;
 "We *looked* like ghosts, ere death had *made* us so."

FRENEAU.

WE had now reached the Accommodation-ladder, which led to the gangway on the larboard side of the *Jersey*; and my station in the boat, as she hauled alongside, was exactly opposite to one of the air-ports in the side of the ship. From this aperture proceeded a strong current of foul vapor, of a kind to which I had been before accustomed while confined on board the *Good Hope*; the peculiarly disgusting smell of which I then recollected, after a lapse of three years. This was, however, far more foul and loathsome than any thing which I had ever met with on board that ship; and it produced a sensation of nausea far beyond my powers of description.

Here, while waiting for orders to ascend on board, we

were addressed by some of the prisoners, from the air-ports. We could not, however, discern their features; as it had now become so dark that we could not distinctly see any object in the interior of the ship. After some questions whence we came, and respecting the manner of our capture, one of the prisoners said to me, that it was “a lamentable “thing to see so many young men in full strength, with the “flush of health upon their countenances, about to enter “that infernal place of abode.” He then added, in a tone and manner but little fitted to afford us much consolation: “Death has no relish for such skeleton carcasses as we are, “but he will now have a feast upon you fresh-comers.”¹

¹ The following extracts from one of the newspapers of the day will show the condition of the naval prisoners on board the *Jersey*, at the time when Captain DRING was placed among them, as described in this chapter:—

[From *The Freeman's Journal: or, the North American Intelligencer*, Vol. II., Numb. LVI., Philadelphia, Wednesday, May 15, 1782.]

“NEW-LONDON, May 3.

“Sunday last a flag returned from New York which brought 20 Americans, “who had been a long time on board a prison ship. About one thousand of “our countrymen remain in the prison ships at New York, great part of “whom have been under close confinement for more than six months, and in “the most deplorable condition; many of them, seeing no prospect of a releasment, are entering into the British service, to elude the contagion with “which those ships are fraught.

“We learn that about 500 persons have died on board the different prison “ships at New York during the last five or six months, and that about 300 “are now sick.”

The following, published during the same month, will throw additional light on this subject:—

[From *The Pennsylvania Packet or, the General Advertiser*, Vol. XI., Numb. 899, Philadelphia, Tuesday, June 18, 1782.]

“PROVIDENCE, May 25.

“Sunday last a flag of truce returned here from New-York, and brought a “few prisoners.

“We learn that about 1100 Americans were on board the prison and hospital-

After lanterns had been lighted on board, for our examination, we ascended the Accommodation-ladder to the upper deck, and passed through the barricado door, where we were examined and our bags of clothes inspected. These we were permitted to retain, provided they contained no money or weapons of any kind.

After each man had given his name and the capacity in which he had served on board the vessel in which he was captured, and the same had been duly registered, we were directed to pass through the other barricado door, on the starboard side, down the ladder leading to the main hatchway. I was detained but a short time with the examination, and was permitted to take my bag of clothes with me below; and passing down the hatchway, which was still open, through a guard of soldiers, I found myself among the wretched and disgusting multitude, a prisoner on board the *Jersey*.¹

The gratings were soon after placed over the hatchways, and fastened down for the night; and I seated myself on the deck, holding my bag with a firm grasp, fearful of losing it among the crowd. I had now ample time to reflect on the horrors of the scene, and to consider the prospect before me. It was impossible to find one of my former shipmates in the darkness; and I had, of course, no one with whom to speak during the long hours of that dreadful night. Surrounded by I knew not whom, except that they were beings as wretched as myself; with dismal sounds meeting my ears from every direction; a nauseous and

“ships at New-York, when the flag sailed from thence; and that from 6 to 7
“were generally buried every day.”

¹ The same forms were observed on the admission to the horrors of the *Jersey*, of EBENEZER FOX. (*Adventures*, 99.)

putrid atmosphere filling my lungs at every breath; and a stifled and suffocating heat, which almost deprived me of sense and even of life.¹

Previous to leaving the boat, I had put on several additional articles of apparel for the purpose of security; but I was soon compelled to disencumber myself of these, and was willing to hazard their loss for a relief from the intolerable heat.

The thought of sleep did not enter my mind; and at length, discovering a glimmering of light through the iron gratings of one of the air-ports, I felt that it would be indeed a luxury if I could but obtain a situation near that place, in order to gain one breath of the exterior air. Clinching my hand firmly around my bag, which I dared not leave, I began to advance towards the side of the ship; but was soon greeted with the curses and imprecations of those who were lying on the deck, and whom I had disturbed in attempting to pass over them. I, however, persevered; and at length arrived near the desired spot, but found it already occupied, and no persuasion could induce a single individual to relinquish his place for a moment.

Thus I passed the first dreadful night, waiting with sorrowful forebodings for the coming day. The dawn at length appeared, but came only to present new scenes of wretchedness, disease, and woe. I found myself surrounded

¹ The reader who shall feel sufficiently interested, will find in the Appendix (No. VI.) an interesting letter from Captain ALEXANDER COFFIN, Junior, to Doctor SAMUEL L. MITCHILL, on "The Destructive Operation of foul Air, tainted Provisions, bad Water, and personal Filthiness, upon Human Constitutions; exemplified in the unparalleled Cruelty of the British to the American Captives at New-York, during the Revolutionary War, on Board their Prison and Hospital-Ships." In that letter, the subject here referred to was fully discussed; and some items of interest were presented which are not found elsewhere.

by a crowd of strange and unknown forms, with the lines of death and famine upon their faces. My former shipmates were all lost and mingled among the multitude, and it was not until we were permitted to ascend the deck, at eight o'clock, that I could discern a single individual whom I had ever seen before. Pale and meagre, the throng came upon deck, to view for a few moments the morning sun, and then to descend again, to pass another day of misery and wretchedness.¹

¹ "The first night on board" has been graphically described by Rev. THOMAS ANDROS, in his *Old Jersey Captive* (9, 10), as well as by EBENEZER FOX, in his *Adventures in the Revolutionary War* (99, 100).

CHAPTER III.

THE FIRST DAY.

"Dull flew the hours, till, from the East displayed,
 "Sweet morn dispelled the horrors of the shade.
 "On every side dire objects met the sight,
 "And pallid forms, and murders of the night :
 "The dead were past their pain ; the living groan,
 "Nor dare to hope another morn their own.
 "But what to them is morn's delightful ray ?
 "Sad and distressful as the close of day,
 "O'er distant streams appears the dewy green,
 "And leafy trees on mountain tops are seen.
 "But they no groves nor grassy mountains tread,
 "Marked for a longer journey to the dead."

FRENEAU.

AFTER passing the weary and tedious night, to whose accumulated horrors I have but slightly alluded, I was permitted to ascend to the upper deck, where other objects, even more disgusting and loathsome, met my view. I found myself surrounded by a motley crew of wretches, with tattered garments and pallid visages, who had hurried from below for the luxury of a little fresh air. Among them, I saw one ruddy and healthful countenance, and recognized the features of one of my late fellow-prisoners on board the *Belisarius*. But how different did he appear from the group around him, who had here been doomed to combat with disease and death. Men who, shrunken and decayed as they stood around him, had been, but a short time before, as strong, as healthful, and as vigorous as him-

self;—men who had breathed the pure breezes of the ocean, or danced lightly in the flower-scented air of the meadow and the hill, and had from thence been hurried into the pent-up air of a crowded Prison-ship, pregnant with putrid fever, foul with deadly contagion; here to linger out the tedious and weary day, the disturbed and anxious night; to count over the days and weeks and months of a wearying and degrading captivity, unvaried but by new scenes of painful suffering, and new inflictions of remorseless cruelty—their brightest hope and their daily prayer, that death would not long delay to release them from their torments.¹

In the wretched groups around me, I saw but too faithful a picture of our own almost certain fate; and found that all which we had been taught to fear of this terrible place of abode was more than realized.

During the night, in addition to my other sufferings, I had been tormented with what I supposed to be vermin; and on coming upon deck, I found that a black silk handkerchief, which I wore around my neck, was completely spotted with them. Although this had often been mentioned as one of the miseries of the place, yet, as I had never before been in a situation to witness any thing of the kind,

¹ The condition of the American naval prisoners had attracted the careful attention of General WASHINGTON, long before the period referred to in the text; but the peculiarity of their character and of the circumstances of the country prevented the extension of any relief. They were not *military* prisoners, nor were they, generally, prisoners taken while in the service of the Continent, and, therefore, entitled to the special protection of the Congress or of General WASHINGTON. On the contrary, they were principally *privateers*, taken while engaged in *private* adventures, and responsible directly to *their owners*. These causes, among others, operated against exchanges, prolonged their captivity, and increased their sufferings, as will be seen by reference to the papers which have been reproduced in Appendix I.

the sight made me shudder; as I knew, at once, that so long as I should remain on board, these loathsome creatures would be my constant companions and unceasing tormentors.¹

The next disgusting object which met my sight was a man suffering with the small-pox; and in a few minutes I found myself surrounded by many others laboring under the same disease, in every stage of its progress.²

As I had never had the small-pox, it became necessary that I should be inoculated; and there being no proper person on board to perform the operation, I concluded to act as my own physician. On looking about me, I soon found a man in the proper stage of the disease, and desired him to favor me with some of the matter for the purpose. He readily complied; observing that it was a necessary precaution on my part, and that my situation was an excellent one in regard to *diet*, as I might depend upon finding that *extremely moderate*.

The only instrument which I could procure, for the purpose of inoculation, was a common pin. With this, having scarified the skin of my hand, between the thumb and forefinger, I applied the matter and bound up my hand. The next morning, I found that the wound had begun to fester; a sure symptom that the application had taken effect.

¹ See, also, Rev. THOMAS ANDROS's description of his own condition (*Old Jersey Captive*, 62), and those of Captain ALEXANDER COFFIN, Junior (*Letter to Doctor SAMUEL L. MITCHILL*, September 4, 1807, Appendix VI.); Rev. Mr. SHERBURNE (*Memoirs*, 107, 116, 117, 119, 123); EBENEZER FOX (*Adventures in the Revolutionary War*, 143-146); Mr. PALMER (*Letter to Mr. DROWNE*, February 20, 1865, Appendix V.).

² The prevalence of this loathsome disease was alluded to by Rev. THOMAS ANDROS (*Old Jersey Captive*, 12, 21), and by Captain ALEXANDER COFFIN, Junior (*Letter to Doctor SAMUEL L. MITCHILL*, September 4, 1807, Appendix VI.).

Many of my former shipmates took the same precaution, and were inoculated during the day. In my case the disorder came on but lightly, and its progress was favourable; and without the least medical advice or attention, by the blessing of Divine Providence, I soon recovered.

Since that time, more than forty years have passed away; but the scar on my hand is still plainly to be seen. I often look upon it when alone, and it brings fresh to my recollection the fearful scene in which I was then placed, the circumstances by which it was attended, and the feelings which I then experienced.

As the prisoners sent from the *Belisarius* had not been formed into regular messes, and numbered according to the regulations of the ship, they were unable to draw their share of provisions for the day in time for cooking. They had now all fasted for nearly twenty-four hours; and knew not in what manner to obtain a morsel of food. For my own part, it fortunately happened that, at the time of our capture, I had taken the precaution to put a few biscuits into my bag; and not having had occasion to use them while on board the *Belisarius*, I was now furnished with the means of satisfying, in some degree, the cravings of my own hunger; and was also enabled to distribute a portion of bread among some of my comrades.

In the course of the day, after the regulations of the ship had been made known to us, we divided ourselves into messes of six men each; and on the next morning, we drew our scanty pittance of food with the rest of our companions.¹

¹ The division of the prisoners into messes of six each is referred to, also, by Rev. Mr. SHERBURNE in his *Memoirs*, 108; and by Mr. FOX in his *Adventures in the Revolutionary War*, 100.

CHAPTER IV.

THE GUN-ROOM AND MESSES.

" But, such a train of endless woes abound,
 " So many mischiefs in these hulks are found,
 " That, of them all, the memory to prolong,
 " Would swell too high the horrors of our song.
 " Hunger and thirst, to work our woe, combine,
 " And mouldy bread, and flesh of rotten swine;
 " The mangled carcass, and the battered brain,
 " The doctor's poison, and the Captain's cane,
 " The soldier's musket, and the Steward's debt,
 " The evening shackle, and the noon-day threat."

FRENEAU.

ON the arrival of prisoners on board the *Jersey*, the first thing necessary to be done was, as soon as possible, to form, or be admitted into, some regular *mess*.¹ On the day of a prisoner's arrival, it was impossible for him to procure any food; and even on the second day, he could not procure any in time to have it cooked. No matter how long he had fasted, nor how acute might be his sufferings from hunger and privation, his petty tyrants would on no occasion deviate from their rule of delivering the prisoner's morsel at a particular hour, and at no other. And the poor, half-famished wretch must absolutely wait until the coming day, before his pittance of food could be boiled with that of his fellow-captives.² It was therefore most prudent for a newly arrived prisoner to gain admittance into some old established mess (which was not attended

¹ Vide page 36, note, *ante*.

² See, also, FOX's *Adventures in the Revolutionary War*, 100, 101.

with much difficulty, as death was daily providing vacancies), for he would thereby be associated with those who were acquainted with the mode of procuring their allowance in time, and be also protected from many impositions, to which, as a stranger, he otherwise would be liable during the first days of his confinement.

The cruel tyrants, to whose petty sway we were subjected on board of this hulk, knew no distinction among their prisoners. Whether taken on the land or on the ocean, in arms or from our own firesides, it was the same to them. No matter in what rank or capacity a prisoner might have been known before his capture, no distinction was here made; we were all "*Rebels*." Our treatment, our fare, its allowance, and its quality, were the same. They did not, of course, interfere in our private arrangements; but left us to manage our affairs in our own way.¹

The extreme after part of the ship, between decks, was called *The Gun-room*.² Although no distinction was made by our masters, yet those among the prisoners who had been officers previous to their capture, had taken possession of this room as their own place of abode; and, from custom, it was considered as belonging exclusively to them. As an officer, I found my way into this apartment; and with such of my late companions as had been officers, was received with civility by those who were already in possession of it, who humanely tendered us such little services as were in their power to offer. We soon became incorporated with them; and having formed ourselves into messes, as nearly as possible according to our grades, we were considered as a part of this family of sufferers.

¹ See, also, Fox's *Adventures in the Revolutionary War*, 101.

² See Figure 3.

The different messes of the prisoners were all numbered; and every morning, at nine o'clock, the Steward and his assistants having taken their station at the window in the bulkhead of the Steward's room,¹ the bell was rung, and the messes called in rotation.

An individual belonging to each mess stood ready, in order to be in time to answer when its number was called. As the number of each mess was spoken, its allowance was handed from the window to the person waiting to receive it; the rations being all prepared previous to the hour of delivery. The prisoner must receive for his mess whatever was offered; and, be its quantity or quality what it might, no alterations or change was ever allowed. We, as prisoners, were allowed each day for *six* men what was equal in quantity to the rations of *four* men, at *full allowance*. That is, each prisoner was furnished in quantity with two-thirds of the allowance of a seaman in the British Navy,² which was as follows:—

On Sunday—One pound of biscuit, one pound of pork, and half a pint of peas.

On Monday—One pound of biscuit, one pint of oatmeal, and two ounces of butter.

On Tuesday—One pound of biscuit and two pounds of beef.

On Wednesday—One and a half pounds of flour and two ounces of suet.

On Thursday—The same as Sunday.

On Friday—The same as Monday.

On Saturday—The same as Tuesday.³

¹ See Figure 3.

² The same rule was observed in the Mill-prison in England, where the American prisoners were confined; and, as already stated, it was made the subject of a Parliamentary inquiry.

³ See, also, Fox's *Adventures in the Revolutionary War*, 101, 102.

Hence, as prisoners, whenever we had our due, we received, as they said, two-thirds of the ordinary allowance of their own seamen, and even this was of a very inferior quality. We never received any butter; but, in its stead, they gave us a substance which they called sweet oil.¹ This was so rancid, and even putrid, that the smell of it, accustomed as we were to every thing foul and nauseous, was more than we could endure. We, however, always received and gave it to the poor, half-starved Frenchmen who were on board, who took it gratefully, and swallowed it with a little salt and their wormy bread. Oil of a similar quality was given to the prisoners on board the *Good Hope*, where I was confined in 1779. There, however, it was of some use to us, as we burnt it in our lamps; being there indulged with the privilege of using lights until nine o'clock at night. But here it was of no service; as we were allowed on board the *Jersey* no light or fire, on any occasion whatever.

¹ Mr. Fox appears to have received butter while he was a prisoner. He said, while describing the food of the prisoners: "*The butter*, the reader will not suppose was the real 'Goshen;' and had it not been for its adhesive properties to retain together the particles of the biscuit, that had been so riddled by the worms as to lose all their attraction of cohesion, we should have considered it no desirable addition to our viands." (*Adventures*, 103.)

CHAPTER V.

THE COOK'S QUARTERS.

"Why, Britain, raged thy insolence and scorn?
 "Why burst thy vengeance on the wretch forlorn?
 "The cheerless captive, to slow death consigned,
 "Chilled with keen frosts, in prison glooms confined,
 "Of hope bereft, by thy vile minions curst,
 "With hunger famished, and consumed by thirst,
 "Without one friend,—when Death's last horror stung,—
 "Rolled the wild eye, and gnawed the anguished tongue."

HUMPHREYS.

HAVING received our daily rations, which were frequently not delivered to us in time to be boiled on the same day, we were consequently often under the necessity of fasting for the next twenty-four hours, if we had not a stock of provisions on hand; or were obliged at times to consume our food in its raw state, when the cravings of hunger could no longer be resisted.

The cooking for the great mass of the prisoners was done under the Forecastle, or, as it was usually called, the Galley, in a boiler or "Great Copper," which was enclosed in brick-work, about eight feet square. This Copper was large enough to contain two or three hogsheads of water. It was made in a square form, and divided into two separate compartments by a partition. In one side of the Copper, the peas and oatmeal for the prisoners were boiled, which was done in fresh water. In the other side, the meat was boiled. This side of the boiler was filled with

salt water from alongside of the ship, by which means the copper became soon corroded, and consequently poisonous: the fatal consequences of which are so obvious that I need not enlarge upon the subject.¹

After the daily rations had been furnished to the different messes, the portion of each mess was designated by a tally fastened to it by a string. Being thus prepared, every ear was anxiously waiting for the summons of the *Cook's bell*. As soon as this was heard to sound, the persons having charge of the different portions of food thronged to the Galley; and in a few minutes after, hundreds of tallies were seen hanging over the sides of the brick-work by their respective strings, each eagerly watched by some individual of the mess, who always waited to receive it. The meat was suffered thus to remain in the boiler but a certain time; and when this had elapsed, the cook's bell was again rung, and the pittance of food must be immediately removed. Whether sufficiently cooked or not, it could remain no longer. The proportions of peas and oatmeal belonging to each mess were measured out from the Copper after they were boiled.²

Among the emaciated crowd of living skeletons who had remained on board for any length of time, the Cook was the only person who appeared to have much flesh upon his bones. He perhaps contrived to obtain a greater quantity of provisions than any of ourselves; but if they were of the same quality with our own, it is obvious that his plumpness of appearance could not be the result of *good living*.

¹ See, also, FOX's *Adventures*, 105, 106; SHERBURNE's *Memoirs*, 108.

² Mr. FOX referred to the imperfect cooking of the food (*Adventures*, 106, 107). Mr. SHERBURNE, also, alluded to it (*Memoirs*, 108); but he appears to have attributed it to the use of green wood for fuel.

He had himself been formerly a prisoner; but seeing no prospect of ever being liberated, he had entered into his present capacity; and his mates and scullions had followed his example, they having also been prisoners at first.¹ I attributed the appearance of our Cook merely to the fact that he was more content with his situation than any other person on board appeared to be. He indeed possessed a considerable share of good humor; and although often cursed by the prisoners (but not in his hearing) for his refusals to comply with their requests, yet, considering the many applications which were made to him for favors, and the encumbrances which were around "his Palace," he really displayed a degree of fortitude and forbearance far beyond what most men would have been capable of exhibiting under similar circumstances. He did, indeed, at times, when his patience was exhausted, "make the hot water fly among us;" but a reconciliation was usually effected with but little difficulty.

In consequence of the poisonous effects produced by the use of the sea-water for boiling our meat in the Great Copper, many of the different messes had obtained permission from "His Majesty the Cook" to prepare their own rations, separate from the general mess in the great boiler. For this purpose, a great number of spikes and hooks had been driven into the brick-work by which the boiler was enclosed, on which to suspend their tin kettles. As soon as we were permitted to go on deck in the morning, some one took the tin kettle belonging to the mess, with as much water and such splinters of wood as we had been able to

¹ Rev. Mr. SHERBURNE also referred to the fact that the Cooks were prisoners, who volunteered to do that duty; and he stated that they were favored in the exchange (*Memoirs*, 108).

procure during the previous day, and carried them to the Galley; and there, having suspended his kettle on one of the hooks or spikes in the brick-work, he stood ready to kindle his little fire as soon as the Cook or his mates would permit it to be done. It required but little fuel to boil our food in these kettles; for their bottoms were made in a concave form, and the fire was applied directly in the centre. And let the remaining brands be ever so small, they were all carefully quenched; and having been conveyed below, were kept for use on a future occasion. Much contention often arose through our endeavors to obtain places around the brick-work; but these disputes were always promptly decided by the Cook, from whose mandate there was no appeal. No sooner had one prisoner completed the cooking for his mess, than another suppliant stood ready to take his place; and they thus continued to throng the Galley, during the whole time that the fire was allowed to remain under the Great Copper, unless it happened to be the pleasure of the Cook to drive them away.

I have said that but little wood was requisite for our purpose; but the great difficulty was to procure a sufficient quantity of fresh water for this manner of cooking. The arrangement by which we effected this was, by agreeing that each man in the mess should, during the day previous, procure and save as much water as possible; as no prisoner was ever allowed to take more than a pint at one time from the scuttle-cask in which it was kept. Every individual was therefore obliged each day to save a little for the common use of the mess on the next morning. By this arrangement, the mess to which I belonged had always a small quantity of fresh water in store, which we carefully

kept, with a few other necessities, in a chest which we used in common.

During the whole period of my confinement, I never partook of any food which had been cooked in the Great Copper. It is to this fact that I have always attributed, under Divine Providence, the degree of health which I preserved while on board. I was thereby also, at times, enabled to procure several necessary and comfortable things, such as tea, sugar, etc.; so that, wretchedly as I was situated, my condition was far preferable to that of most of my fellow-sufferers—which has ever been with me a theme of sincere and lasting gratitude to Heaven.

But terrible indeed was the condition of most of my fellow-captives. Memory still brings before me those emaciated beings, moving from the Galley with their wretched pittance of meat; each creeping to the spot where his mess were assembled, to divide it with a group of haggard and sickly creatures, their garments hanging in tatters around their meagre limbs, and the hue of death upon their careworn faces. By these it was consumed with their scanty remnants of bread, which was often mouldy and filled with worms. And even from this vile fare they would rise up in torments from the cravings of unsatisfied hunger and thirst.

No vegetables of any description were ever afforded us by our inhuman keepers. Good Heaven! what a luxury to us would then have been even a few potatoes—if but the very leavings of the swine of our country.¹

¹ See, also, Mr. Fox's *Adventures*, 107.

CHAPTER VI.

O U R S I T U A T I O N .

“ Oh ! my heart sinks, my trembling eyes o’erflow,
 “ When memory paints the picture of their woe.
 “ Where my poor countrymen in bondage wait
 “ The slow enfranchisement of lingering fate ;
 “ Greeting with groans the unwelcome night’s return,
 “ While rage and shame their gloomy bosoms burn ;
 “ And chiding, every hour, the slow-paced sun,
 “ Endure their woes till all his race was run.
 “ No eye to mark their sufferings with a tear,
 “ No friend to comfort, and no hope to cheer.
 “ And like the dull unpitied brutes, repair
 “ To stalls as wretched and as coarse a fare ;
 “ Thank Heaven, one day of misery was o’er,
 “ And sink to sleep, and wish to wake no more.”

DAY.

BEFORE attempting a more minute account of our manner of living on board the *Jersey*, it may be proper to add a further description of the ship. The Quarter-deck covered about one-fourth part of the upper deck, from the stern ; and the Forecastle extended from the stem, about one-eighth part of the length of the upper deck. Sentinels were stationed on the gangways on each side of the upper deck leading from the Quarter-deck to the Forecastle. These gangways were about five feet wide ; and here the prisoners were allowed to pass and repass. The intermediate space from the bulkhead of the Quarter-deck to the Forecastle was filled with long spars or booms, and called the Spar-deck. The temporary covering afforded by the

Spar-deck was of the greatest benefit to the prisoners, as it served to shield us from the rain and the scorching rays of the sun. It was here also that our movables were placed while we were engaged in cleaning the lower decks. The Spar-deck was also the only place where we were allowed to walk, and was therefore continually crowded through the day by those of the prisoners who were upon deck. Owing to the great number of the prisoners, and the small space afforded us by the Spar-deck, it was our custom to walk in platoons, each facing the same way, and turning at the same time. The Derrick, for taking in wood, water, etc., stood on the starboard side of the Spar-deck. On the larboard side of the ship was placed the Accommodation-ladder, leading from the gangway to the water. At the head of this ladder a sentinel was also stationed.

The head of the Accommodation-ladder was near the door of the barricado, which extended across the front of the Quarter-deck, and projected a few feet beyond the sides of the ship. The barricado was about ten feet high, and was pierced with loop-holes for musketry, in order that the prisoners might be fired on from behind it, if occasion should require.

The regular crew of the ship consisted of a Captain, two Mates, a Steward, a Cook, and about twelve sailors.¹ The crew of the ship had no communication whatever with the prisoners. No prisoner was ever permitted to pass through the barricado door, except when it was required that the messes should be examined and regulated; in which case, each man had to pass through, and go down between decks, and there remain until the examination was completed. None of the guard or of the ship's crew ever came among

¹ See, also, Mr. Fox's *Adventures*, 114.

the prisoners while I was on board. I never saw one of her officers or men, except when they were passing in their boat, to or from the stern-ladder.

On the two decks below, where we were confined at night, our chests, boxes, and bags were arranged in two lines along the deck, about ten feet distant from the sides of the ship; thus leaving as wide a space unencumbered in the middle part of each deck, fore and aft, as our crowded situation would admit. Between these tiers of chests, etc., and the sides of the ship, was the place where the different messes assembled; and some of the messes were also separated from their neighbors by a temporary partition of chests, etc. Some individuals of the different messes usually slept on the chests, in order to preserve their contents from being plundered during the night.¹

At night, the spaces in the middle of the deck were much encumbered with hammocks; but these were always removed in the morning.

The prisoners, as before stated, were confined on the two main decks below. My usual place of abode being in the Gun-room, on the centre deck, I was never under the necessity of descending to the lower dungeon; and during my confinement, I had no disposition to visit it. It was inhabited by the most wretched in appearance of all our miserable company. From the disgusting and squalid appearance of the groups which I saw ascending the stairs which led to it, it must have been more dismal, if possible, than that part of the hulk where I resided. Its occupants appeared to be mostly foreigners, who had seen and survived every variety of human suffering. The faces of many

¹ Rev. Mr. SHERBURNE (*Memoirs*, 107) also alludes to this insecurity of private property among the prisoners.

of them were covered with dirt and filth; their long hair and beards matted and foul; clothed in rags, and with scarcely a sufficient supply of these to cover their disgusting bodies. Many among them possessed no clothing except the remnants of those garments which they wore when first brought on board; and were unable to procure even any materials for patching these together, when they had been worn to tatters by constant use; and had this been in their power, they had not the means of procuring a piece of thread, or even a needle. Some, and indeed many of them, had not the means of procuring a razor or an ounce of soap.

Their beards were occasionally reduced by each other with a pair of shears or scissors; but this operation, though conducive to cleanliness, was not productive of much improvement in their personal appearance. The skins of many of them were discolored by continual washing in salt water, added to the circumstance that it was impossible for them to wash their linen in any other manner than by laying it on the deck, and stamping on it with their feet, after it had been immersed in salt water, their bodies remaining naked during the operation.

To men thus situated, every thing like ordinary cleanliness was impossible. Much that was disgusting in their appearance undoubtedly originated from neglect, which long confinement had rendered habitual, until it created a confirmed indifference to personal appearance.¹

As soon as the gratings had been fastened over the hatchways for the night, we generally went to our sleeping-places. It was, of course, always desirable to obtain a station as

¹ This description of the inhabitants of the lower deck of the *Jersey* agrees with that given of them by Mr. Fox (*Adventures*, 107, 108).

near as possible to the side of the ship, and, if practicable, in the immediate vicinity of one of the air-ports, as this not only afforded us a better air, but also rendered us less liable to be trodden upon by those who were moving about the decks during the night.

But silence was a stranger to our dark abode. There were continual noises during the night. The groans of the sick and the dying; the curses poured out by the weary and exhausted upon our inhuman keepers; the restlessness caused by the suffocating heat and the confined and poisoned air, mingled with the wild and incoherent ravings of delirium, were the sounds which every night were raised around us in all directions.¹ Such was our ordinary situation; but, at times, the consequences of our crowded condition were still more terrible, and proved fatal to many of our number in a single night.

But, strange as it may appear, notwithstanding all the maladies and sufferings which were there endured, I knew many who had been inmates of that abode for two years, who were apparently well. They had, as they expressed it, "been through the furnace, and became *seasoned*." Most of these, however, were foreigners, who appeared to have abandoned all hope of ever being exchanged, and had become quite indifferent in regard to their place of abode.²

But far different was the condition of that portion of our number who were natives of the Northern States. These formed by far the most numerous class of the prisoners. Most of these were young men, who had been induced, by necessity or inclination, to try the perils of the sea, and had, in many instances, been captured soon after leaving their

¹ See, also, Rev. Mr. ANDROS's *Old Jersey Captive*, 13.

² The same circumstance was related by Mr. Fox in his *Adventures*, 108.

homes, and during their first voyage. After they had been here immured, the sudden change in their situation was like a sentence of death. Many a one was crushed down beneath that sickness of the heart, so well described by the Poet—

—————“Night and day,
 “Brooding on what he had been, what he was;
 “’Twas more than he could bear. His longing fits
 “Thickened upon him. *His desire for Home*
 “*Became a madness.*”

These poor creatures had, in many instances, been plundered of their wearing apparel by their captors. And here, the dismal and disgusting objects by which they were surrounded, the vermin which infested them, their vile and loathsome food, and what, with *them*, was far from being the lightest of their trials, their ceaseless longing after their *homes*, and the scenes to which they had been accustomed; all combined to produce a wonderful effect upon them. Dejection and anguish were soon visible in their countenances. They became dismayed and terror-stricken; and many of them absolutely died that most awful of all human deaths, the effects of *a broken heart*.

“Denied the comforts of a dying bed,
 “With not a pillow to support the head;
 “How could they else but pine and grieve and sigh,
 “Detest that wretched life, and *wish* to die?”

CHAPTER VII.

THE WORKING-PARTY.

“No masts or sails these crowded ships adorn,
“Dismal to view, neglected and forlorn;
“Here, mighty ills oppress’d the imprison’d throng,
“Dull were our slumbers, and our nights were long—
“From morn to eve, along the decks we lay,
“Scorch’d into fevers by the solar ray.”

FRENEAU.

A CUSTOM had long been established, that certain labor which it was necessary should be performed daily, should be done by a company, usually called the “Working-party.” This consisted of about twenty able-bodied men, chosen from among the prisoners, and was commanded, in daily rotation, by those of our number who had formerly been officers of vessels. The commander of the party for the day bore the title of “Boatswain.” The members of the Working-party received, as a compensation for their services, a full allowance of provisions, and a half pint of rum each, per day, with the privilege of going on deck early in the morning, to breathe the pure air. This privilege alone was a sufficient compensation for all the duty which was required of them.

Their routine of service was to wash down that part of the upper deck and gangways where the prisoners were permitted to walk; to spread the awning, and to hoist on board the wood, water, and other supplies, from the

boats in which the same were brought alongside the ship.

When the prisoners ascended the upper deck, in the morning, if the day was fair, each carried up his hammock and bedding, which were all placed upon the spar-deck, or booms. The Working-party then took the sick and disabled who remained below, and placed them in the bunks prepared for them upon the centre deck; they then, if any of the prisoners had died during the night, carried up the dead bodies, and laid them upon the booms; after which, it was their duty to wash down the main decks below; during which operation, the prisoners remained upon the upper deck, except such as chose to go below, and volunteer their services in the performance of this duty.

Around the railing of the hatchway leading from the centre to the lower deck, were placed a number of large tubs for the occasional use of the prisoners during the night, and as general receptacles of filth. Although these were indispensably necessary to us, yet they were highly offensive. Nevertheless, on account of our crowded situation, many of the prisoners were obliged to sleep in their immediate vicinity. It was a part of the duty of the Working-party to carry these tubs on deck, at the time when the prisoners ascended in the morning, and to return them between decks in the afternoon.

Our beds and clothing were kept on deck, until it was nearly the hour when we were to be ordered below for the night. During this interval, the chests, etc., on the lower decks being piled up, and the hammocks removed; the decks washed and cleared of all encumbrances, except the poor wretches who lay in the bunks; it was quite refreshing, after the suffocating heat and foul vapors of the night,

to walk between decks. There was then some circulation of air through the ship, and, for a few hours, our existence was in some degree tolerable.¹

About two hours before sunset, the order was generally issued for the prisoners to carry their hammocks, etc., below. After this had been done, we were allowed either to retire between decks, or to remain above until sunset, according to our own pleasure. Every thing which we could do conducive to cleanliness having then been performed, if we ever felt any thing like enjoyment in this wretched abode, it was during this brief interval, when we breathed the cool air of the approaching night, and felt the luxury of our evening pipe. But short indeed was this period of repose. The Working-party were soon ordered to carry the tubs below, and we prepared to descend to our gloomy and crowded dungeons. This was no sooner done, than the gratings were closed over the hatchways, the sentinels stationed, and we left to sicken and pine beneath our accumulated torments; with our guards above crying aloud, through the long night, "*All's well!*"²

¹ Reference was also made to this Working-party by Mr. Fox (*Adventures*, 109, 110), and by the Rev. Mr. SHERBURNE (*Memoirs*, 108). The latter stated that these Working-parties were favored when exchanges were made.

² See, also, EBENEZER FOX'S *Adventures*, 110, 111.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE HOSPITAL-SHIPS AND NURSES.

“Thou *Scorpion*, fatal to the crowded throng,
 “Dire theme of horror and Plutonian song,
 “Requir’st my lay. Thy sultry decks I know,
 “And all the torments that exist below.”

* * * * *

“The briny wave that Hudson’s bosom fills,
 “Drained through her bottom in a thousand rills,
 “Rotten and old, replete with sighs and groans,
 “Scarce on the waters, she sustained her bones;
 “Here, doomed to toil, or foundered in the tide,
 “At the moist pumps, incessantly we plied.
 “Here, doomed to starve, like famished dogs, we tore
 “The scant allowance which our tyrants bore.”

FRENEAU.

THE *Jersey* was used as a place of confinement for *seamen only*. I never knew an instance of a soldier being sent on board her as a prisoner. During my confinement in the summer of 1782, the average number of prisoners on board the *Jersey* was about ONE THOUSAND. They were composed of the crews of vessels of all nations with whom the English were then at war. By far the greater number, however, had been captured in American vessels.

The three Hospital-ships, *Scorpion*, *Strombolo*, and *Hunter*, were used for the reception of the sick from the principal hulk.¹ The *Jersey* at length became so crowded, and the mortality on board her increased so rapidly, that

¹ See, also, SHERBURNE’S *Memoirs*, 108.

sufficient room could not be found on board the Hospital-ships for their reception. Under these dreadful circumstances, it was determined to prepare a part of the upper deck of the *Jersey* for the reception of the sick from between decks. Bunks were therefore erected on the after part of the upper deck, on the larboard side, where those who felt the symptoms of approaching sickness could lie down, in order to be found by the nurses as soon as possible, and be thereby also prevented from being trampled upon by the other prisoners, to which they were continually liable while lying on the deck.

I have stated that the number of the Hospital-ships was three. One of them, however, was used rather as a Store-ship and dépôt for the Medical Department, and as a station for the Doctor's-mates and boat's crews attending the whole. This ship was, I think, the *Hunter*.

I never was on board either of the Hospital-ships, and could never learn many particulars in relation to the treatment of the sufferers on board them; for but few ever returned from their recesses to the *Jersey*.¹ I knew but three such instances during the whole period of my imprisonment. But I could form some idea of the interior of the Hospital-ships from viewing their outward appearance, which was disgusting in the highest degree. Knowing, as we did, from whence their wretched inmates had been taken, the sight of these vessels was terrible to us; and

¹ Rev. Mr. SHERBURNE (*Memoirs*, 110-113) described his experience in one of these Hospital-ships.

He stated that they, too, were very crowded; that the medical attendance was very limited; that the provisions were inferior in quality; that the Nurses were negligent of their duties, and thievish in their propensities; and, generally, that the same neglect which was so conspicuous in the Prison-ships also prevailed in the Hospitals.

their appearance more shocking than that of our own miserable hulk.

But whatever might be our sensations on viewing the Hospital-ships, they were, undoubtedly, in many respects, preferable to the *Jersey*. They were not so crowded, and of course afforded more room for breathing. They were furnished with awnings, and provided with a wind-sail to each hatchway, for the purpose of conducting the fresh air between decks, where the sick were placed; and, more than all, the hatchways were left open during the night,¹ as our kind keepers were under no apprehensions of danger from the feeble and helpless wretches who were there deposited.

When communication between the ships was required, or any thing wanted, it was made known by signals, which were promptly attended to by the boats from the *Hunter*. Our condition caused our keepers much labor, and furnished employment which, to some of them, was far from being agreeable.

There were on board the *Jersey*, among the prisoners, about half a dozen men, known by the appellation of "Nurses." I never learned by whom they were appointed, or whether they had any regular appointment at all. But one fact I well knew; they were all thieves.² They were, however, sometimes useful in assisting the sick to ascend from below to the gangway on the upper deck, to be examined by the visiting Surgeon, who attended from the *Hunter* every day (when the *weather* was good). If a sick man was

¹ Rev. Mr. SHERBURNE appears to have experienced no such favor on the Hospital-ship *Frederic*, while he was an invalid on that vessel. (*Memoirs*, 111.)

² Rev. Mr. SHERBURNE (*Memoirs*, 110) has informed us that this depravity extended to the Nurses on board the Hospital-ships. He said, also, that they were *American prisoners who were paid by the British Government for their services*.

pronounced by the Surgeon to be a proper subject for one of the Hospital-ships, he was forthwith put into the boat in waiting alongside; but not without the loss or detention of all his effects, if he had any, as these were at once taken into possession by the Nurses, as their own property.¹

I will here relate an incident; not on account of its extreme aggravation, but because it occurred immediately under my own eye, which will show, in some degree, the kind of treatment which was given by these Nurses to the poor, weak, and dying men who were left to their care, and who were about to be transported to a Hospital-ship, and, in all probability, in a few hours, to the sand-bank on the shore.

I had found Mr. ROBERT CARVER, our Gunner while on board the *Chance*, sick in one of the bunks where those retired who wished to be removed. He was without a bed or pillow, and had put on all the wearing apparel which he possessed, wishing to preserve it, and being sensible of his situation. I found him sitting upright in the bunk, with his great-coat on over the rest of his garments, and his hat between his knees. The weather was excessively hot, and, in the place where he lay, the heat was overpowering. I at once saw that he was delirious—a sure presage that his end was near. I took off his great-coat, and having folded and placed it under his head for a pillow, I laid him down upon it, and went immediately to prepare him some tea. I was absent but a few minutes, and on returning, met one of the thievish Nurses, with CARVER's great-coat in his hand. On

¹ Rev. Mr. SHERBURNE (*Memoirs*, 110) has informed us that the personal effects and *the hair* of deceased prisoners were claimed by these Nurses, as their own, and it appears that the claim was conceded by those in authority, as a perquisite attached to the office of a Nurse.

ordering him to return it, his only reply was that it was a perquisite of the Nurses, and the only one they had; that the man was dying, and the garment could be of no further use to him.

I, however, took possession of the coat, and, on my liberation, returned it to the family of the owner. Mr. CARVER soon after expired where he lay. We procured a blanket, in which we wrapped his body, which was thus prepared for interment. Others of the crew of the *Chance* had died previous to that time. Mr. CARVER was a man of strong and robust constitution. Such men were subject to the most violent attacks of the fever, and were also its most certain victims.

I attach no blame to our keepers, in regard to the thievish habits of the Nurses, over whom they had no control. I have merely related this incident for the purpose of more clearly showing to what a state of wretchedness we were reduced.

CHAPTER IX.

THE INTERMENT OF THE DEAD.

“ By feeble hands their shallow graves were made ;
“ No stone, memorial, o’er their corpses laid.
“ In barren sands, and far from home, they lie,
“ No friend to shed a tear when passing by ;
“ O’er the mean tombs, insulting foemen tread ;
“ Spurn at the sand, and curse the rebel dead.”

FRENEAU.

IT has already been mentioned that one of the duties of the Working-party was, on each morning, to place the sick in the bunks; and if any of the prisoners had died during the night, to carry the dead bodies to the upper deck, where they were laid upon the gratings. Any prisoner who could procure and chose to furnish a blanket, was allowed to sew it around the remains of his deceased companions.¹

The signal being made, a boat was soon seen approaching from the *Hunter*; and if there were any dead on board the other ships, the boat received them, on her way to the *Jersey*.

The corpse was laid upon a board, to which some ropes were attached as straps; as it was often the case, that bodies were sent on shore for interment before they had become sufficiently cold and stiff to be lowered into the boat by a single strap. Thus prepared, a tackle was

¹ See, also, EBENEZER FOX’S *Adventures*, 111.

attached to the board, and the remains of the sufferer were hoisted over the side of the ship into the boat, without further ceremony. If several bodies were waiting for interment, but one of them was lowered into the boat at a time, for the sake of decency. The prisoners were always very anxious to be engaged in the duty of interment; not so much from a feeling of humanity, or from a wish of paying respect to the remains of the dead (for to these feelings they had almost become strangers), as from the desire of once more placing their feet upon the land, if but for a few minutes. A sufficient number of the prisoners having received permission to assist in this duty, they entered the boat, accompanied by a guard of soldiers, and put off from the ship.¹

I obtained leave to assist in the burial of the body of Mr. CARVER, whose death was mentioned in the preceding Chapter. As this was done in the ordinary mode, a relation of the circumstances attending it will afford a correct idea of the general method of interment.

After landing at a low wharf which had been built from the shore, we first went to a small hut, which stood near the wharf, and was used as a place of deposit for the hand-barrows and shovels provided for these occasions. Having placed the corpses on the hand-barrows, and received our hoes and shovels, we proceeded to the side of the bank near the Wale bogt. Here, a vacant space having been selected, we were directed to dig a trench in the sand, of a proper length for the reception of the bodies. We continued our labor until our guards considered that a sufficient space had been excavated. The corpses were then laid into the trench without ceremony, and we threw the sand over

¹ See, also, EBENEZER FOX'S *Adventures*, 111.

them. The whole appeared to produce no more effect upon our guards than if we were burying the bodies of dead animals instead of men. They scarcely allowed us time to look about us; for no sooner had we heaped the earth above the trench, than the order was given to march. But a single glance was sufficient to show us parts of many bodies which were exposed to view; although they had probably been placed there, with the same mockery of interment, but a few days before.¹

¹ See, also, EBENEZER FOX'S *Adventures*, 111-113; and REV. THOMAS ANDROS'S *Old Jersey Captive*, 15. General JEREMIAH JOHNSON has left some very interesting information on this subject, in his *Recollections of New York and Brooklyn* (Appendix VII.), to which the reader is referred.

Mr. HENRY T. TUCKERMAN, with characteristic inaccuracy, informed the world, a few years since, that "for many years after the termination of the war, a melancholy token of this barbarous tyranny remained on the shores of Long-Island, near where the infamous *Jersey* prison-ship was moored. "When the tide ebbed, the bones of those who had perished on board, amid the horrors of famine, contagion, and darkness, were exposed to view." (*Life of Silas Talbot*, 91.)

Inasmuch as "the high bank" in which the prisoners were buried was not, nor had been, overflowed by the waters of the Wale bogt when Mr. TUCKERMAN wrote the paragraph which has been quoted, the "bones" to which he referred were as much exposed when the tide flowed as when it "ebbed;" and the cause as well as the purpose of the discrimination between the ebbing and the flowing of the tide, by the distinguished poet, would not have been understood had it not been for the ugly fact, that the volume* from which he is said to have silently taken his material for the *Life of Silas Talbot* contains a statement, which he failed to understand, that the "rotten remains" of the *Jersey*, not those of the deceased prisoners, were embodied in the mud of the Wale bogt; and that, "when the tide ebbed," "HER rotten remains" (page 107), NOT "the bones of those who had perished on board" of her, "were exposed to view"—a difference which was as marked in its character as is the difference between poetry and history, or that which distinguishes an insolent plagiarist from an unpretending laborer in the harvest-field of American history.

* *An Historical Sketch, to the end of the Revolutionary War, of the Life of SILAS TALBOT, Esq., of the State of Rhode-Island, lately Commander of the United States frigate, the Constitution, and of an American squadron in the West-Indies.* 12mo. New-York, 1803.

Having thus performed, as well as we were permitted to do it, the last duty to the dead, and the guards having stationed themselves on each side of us, we began reluctantly to retrace our steps to the boat. We had enjoyed the pleasure of breathing for a few moments the air of our native soil; and the thought of returning to the crowded Prison-ship was terrible in the extreme. As we passed by the water's side, we implored our guards to allow us to bathe, or even to wash ourselves for a few minutes; but this was refused us.

I was the only prisoner of our party who wore a pair of shoes, and well recollect the circumstance that I took them from my feet for the pleasure of feeling the earth, or rather the sand, as I went along. It was a high gratification to us to bury our feet in the sand, and to shove them through it, as we passed on our way. We went by a small patch of turf, some pieces of which we tore up from the earth, and obtained permission to carry them on board for our comrades to smell them. Circumstances like these may appear trifling to the careless reader; but let him be assured that they were far from being trifles to men situated as we had been. The inflictions which we had endured, the duty which we had just performed, the feeling that we must in a few minutes re-enter our place of suffering, from which in all probability we should never return alive—all tended to render every thing connected with the firm land beneath, and the sweet air above us, objects of deep and thrilling interest.

Having arrived at the hut, we there deposited our implements, and walked to the landing-place, where we prevailed on our guards, who were Hessians, to allow us the gratification of remaining nearly half an hour before we re-entered the boat.

Near us stood a house occupied by a miller; and we had been told that a tide-mill which he attended was in its immediate vicinity,¹ as a landing-place for which, the wharf where we stood had been erected. It would have afforded me a high degree of pleasure to have been permitted to enter this dwelling, the probable abode of harmony and peace. It was designated by the prisoners by the appellation of the "Old Dutchman's," and its very walls were viewed by us with feelings of veneration; as we had been told that the amiable daughter of its owner had kept a regular account of the number of bodies which had been brought on shore for interment from the *Jersey* and the Hospital-ships. This could easily be done in the house, as its windows commanded a fair view of the landing-place. We were not, however, gratified on this occasion either by the sight of herself, or of any other inmate of the house.

Sadly did we approach and re-enter our foul and disgusting place of confinement. The pieces of turf which we carried on board were sought for by our fellow-prisoners with the greatest avidity, every fragment being passed by them from hand to hand, and its smell inhaled, as if it had been a fragrant rose.

¹ Remsen's Mill.

CHAPTER X.

THE CREW OF THE *CHANCE*.

————— “At dead of night,
 “In sullen silence, stalks forth Pestilence:
 “Contagion, close behind, taints all her steps
 “With poisonous dew; no smiting hand is seen,
 “No sound is heard; but soon her secret path
 “Is marked with desolation;—heaps on heaps,
 “Promiscuous drop. No friend, no refuge near:
 “All, all is false and treacherous around;
 “All that they touch, or taste, or breathe is death.
 * * * * * *
 “Yet, still they breathe destruction; still go on,
 “Inhumanly ingenious, to find out
 “New pains for life, new terrors for the grave;
 “Artificers of death!”

PORTEUS.

MY visit to the shore, as described in the last Chapter, was the first one which I had been permitted to make. I had then been a prisoner for several weeks, and my situation had become in some degree familiar; but my visit to the land caused me to feel the extent of my wretchedness, and to view my condition with feelings of greater abhorrence, and even of despair.

I have already observed that Mr. CARVER was not the first victim among the crew of the *Chance*. The first individual was a lad named PALMER, about twelve years of age, the youngest of our crew. While on board the *Chance*, he was a waiter to the officers; and he continued in that duty after we were placed on board the *Jersey*. He had, with

many others of our crew, been inoculated for the small-pox immediately after our arrival on board. The usual symptoms appeared at the proper time, and we supposed the appearances of his disorder to be favorable; but these soon changed, and the yellow hue of his features declared the approach of death. He became delirious, and died during the succeeding night. He was a member of the same mess with myself, and had always looked up to me as a protector, and particularly so during his sickness. That night was truly a wretched one to me; for I spent almost the whole of it in perfect darkness, holding him during his convulsions; and it was heart-rending to hear the screams of the dying boy, while calling and imploring, in his delirium, for the assistance of his mother and other persons of his family. For a long time, all persuasion or argument was useless, to silence his groans and supplications. But exhausted nature at length sunk under its agonies; his screams became less piercing, and his struggles less violent. In the midnight gloom of our dungeon I could not see him die; but knew, by placing my hand over his mouth, that his breathings were becoming shorter, and thus felt the last breath as it quit his frame. The first glimmer of morning light through the iron grate fell upon his pallid and lifeless corpse.

I had done every thing in my power for this poor boy during his sickness, and could render him but one more kind office. I assisted in sewing a blanket round his body, which was, with those of the others who had died during the night, conveyed upon deck in the morning—to be, at the usual hour, hurried to the bank at the Wale bogt. I regretted that I could not assist at his interment; but this was impossible, as I was then suffering with the small-pox

myself; neither am I certain that permission would have been granted me, if I had sought it. Our keepers seemed to have no idea that the prisoners could feel any regard for each other, but appeared to think us as cold-hearted as themselves. If any thing like sympathy was ever shown us by any of them, it was done by the Hessians. In fact, the prisoners had lost almost every feeling of humanity for each other; and, being able to reciprocate but few offices of kindness, their feelings had become withered, and self-preservation appeared to be their only wish.¹

The next deaths among our own crew were those of JAMES MITCHELL and his son-in-law, THOMAS STURMEY. It is a singular fact, that both of these men died at the same time. I did not even know that either of them had been sick, and my first intimation of the fact was when I was told that their bodies were lying on the grating on the upper deck. I there found them lying in the same clothes in which they had died. We procured a couple of blankets and placed them around the bodies, previous to their interment. I applied for permission to accompany their remains to the land, and to assist in their burial; but this was denied me. I however watched their progress to the shore, and saw them deposited in the bank.

Mr. MITCHELL was generally known among his fellow-citizens of Providence; and there are many now living who well recollect him.

It will at first appear almost incredible that my former companions, my friends and fellow-townsmen, could be thus sick and dying so near me, and I remain in profound igno-

¹ This remarkable result of the confinement of American prisoners was also noticed by Rev. Mr. SHERBURNE (*Memoirs*, 112, 113), and to it may possibly be attributed some portion of the distress which they experienced.

rance of the fact. But such was in reality our situation in this little world of concentrated misery. We were separated and scattered over the different parts of the crowded hulk, and mingled with the great mass of the prisoners; and sometimes meeting each other among the multitude, we would, on inquiring respecting the fate of an old comrade, receive the appalling information that he had either been attacked by sickness, and removed to one of the Hospital-ships; or had died, and gone to his last home under the bank of the Wale bogt.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MARINE GUARD.

"Remembrance shudders at this scene of fears—
 "Still in my view some tyrant chief appears,
 "Some base-born Hessian slave walks threatening by;
 "Some servile Scot, with murder in his eye,
 "Still haunts my sight, as vainly they bemoan
 "*Rebellions* managed so unlike *their own*.

* * * * * *

"No waters laded from the bubbling spring,
 "To these dire ships these little tyrants bring—
 "No drop was granted to the midnight prayer,
 "To *Rebels* in these regions of despair!
 "The loathsome cask a deadly dose contains,
 "Its poison circling through the languid veins!"

FRENEAU.

IN addition to the regular officers and seamen of the *Jersey*, there were stationed on board about a dozen old invalid Marines; but our actual guard was composed of soldiers from the different regiments quartered on Long Island.¹

The number usually on duty on board was about thirty. Each week, they were relieved by a fresh party. They were English, Hessians, and Refugees. We always preferred the Hessians, from whom we received better treatment than from the others. As to the English, we did not complain, being aware that they merely obeyed their orders

¹ See, also, EBENEZER FOX'S *Adventures*, 114.

in regard to us; but the Refugees, or Royalists,¹ as they termed themselves, were viewed by us with scorn and hatred. I do not recollect, however, that a guard of these miscreants was placed over us more than three times, during which their presence occasioned much tumult and confusion; for the prisoners could not endure the sight of these men, and occasionally assailed them with abusive language, while they, in return, treated us with all the severity in their power.

We dared not approach near them, for fear of their bayonets, and, of course, could not pass along the gangways where they were stationed; but were obliged to crawl along upon the booms, in order to get fore and aft, or to go up or down the hatchways. They never answered any of our remarks respecting them, but would merely point to their uniforms, as if saying, We are clothed by our Sovereign, while you are naked. They were as much gratified at the idea of leaving us, as we were at seeing them depart. Many provoking gestures were made by the prisoners as they left the ship, and our curses followed them as far as we could make ourselves heard.

A regiment of Refugees, with a green uniform, was then quartered at Brooklyn. We were invited to join this Royal band, and to partake of his Majesty's pardon and bounty. But the prisoners, in the midst of their unbounded suffering, of their dreadful privation and consuming anguish, spurned the insulting offer. They preferred to linger and to die, rather than desert their country's cause. During

¹ The author of this volume employed this term, and I have not felt at liberty to change it. The Refugees were usually styled, both by themselves and by the officers of the Government, *Loyalists*; by the Americans they were styled, as they still are, *Tories*.

the whole period of my confinement, I never knew a single instance of enlistment from among the prisoners of the *Jersey*.¹

The only duty, to my knowledge, ever performed by the old Marines was to guard the water-butt, near which one of them was stationed with a drawn cutlass. They were ordered to allow no prisoner to carry away more than one pint of water at once, but we were allowed to drink at the butt as much as we pleased; for which purpose, two or three copper ladles were chained to the cask. Having been long on board, and regular in the performance of this duty, they had become familiar with the faces of the prisoners, and could thereby, in many instances, detect the frauds which we practised upon them, in order to obtain more fresh water for our cooking than was allowed us by the regulations of the ship. Over the water, the soldiers had no control.

The daily consumption of water on board was, at least, equal to seven hundred gallons. I know not whence it was brought, but presume it was from Brooklyn. One large gondola or boat was kept in constant employment to furnish the necessary supply.²

¹ By reference to Mr. Fox's *Adventures* (147-149), it will be seen that the British recruiting officers were not always unsuccessful on board the *Jersey*; while the correspondence of General WASHINGTON (*Letter to the President of Congress, 27th December, 1781, Appendix I., No. 4*) confirmed the statement.

² This subject has been differently stated by different writers. Captain DRING, it will be perceived, "presumed it was brought from Brooklyn;" Rev. THOMAS ANDROS (*Old Jersey Captive* 17), said, "Our water was good, could we have had enough of it," without alluding to the source of the supply. Captain ALEXANDER COFFIN, JUNIOR (*Letter to Doctor MITCHILL, Appendix VI.*), said it was taken from the city of New York, in the schooner *Relief*, and that it was "execrable" in quality. He remarked, further: "The water that we were forced to use was carried from this city [*New York*]; and I positively assert

So much of the water as was not required on deck for immediate use was conducted into butts, placed in the lower hold of the hulk, through a leather hose, passing through her side, near the bends. To this water we had recourse, when we could procure no other.

When water in any degree fit for use was brought on board, it is impossible to describe the struggle which ensued, in consequence of our haste and exertions to procure a draught of it. The best which was ever afforded us was very brackish, but that from the ship's hold was nauseous in the highest degree. This must be evident, when the fact is stated, that the butts for receiving it had never been cleaned since they were placed in the hold. The quantity

“ that I never, after having followed the sea thirty years, had on board of any
 “ ship (and I have been three years on some of my voyages) water so bad as
 “ that we were obliged to use on board the old *Jersey*, when there was, as if it
 “ were to tantalize us, as fine water, not more than three cables' length from
 “ us, at the mill in the Wallabout, as was perhaps ever drank.” EBENEZER
 FOX was entirely silent on the subject. General JEREMIAH JOHNSON (*Recollections of Brooklyn and New York*, Appendix VII.) said the *Jersey* was supplied daily from his spring—the very forbidden spring to which Captain COFFIN referred in his letter, just quoted. Mr. PALMER (Appendix V.) referred to some water taken from the hold of the vessel, which was as “ ropery as molasses.” The Report of the Committee of Officers (Appendix I., No. 7) confirmed the statement, concerning the quality of the water ordinarily in use, of the Rev. Mr. ANDROS, without mentioning the source of the supply.

From all these authorities, it is not easy to determine the true state of the case. It is not improbable, however, that the usual practice was to draw the supplies daily, as Captain DRING and General JOHNSON have stated, from the Long Island shore—that being more convenient than any other;—that when the springs at the Wale bogt were exhausted, either from the usual summer drought or other causes, recourse was had, as Captain COFFIN has stated (Appendix VI.), to the city of New York;—and that, when all other sources failed, or when any other cause prevented the employment of the boats for the purpose of supplying the ships, either from Mr. JOHNSON's spring or from New York, the hogsheads or tanks in the hold of the vessel were necessarily resorted to, as Captain DRING has stated in the following paragraph.

of foul sediment which they contained was therefore very great, and was disturbed and mixed with the water as often as a new supply was poured into them; thereby rendering their whole contents a substance of the most disgusting and poisonous nature. I have not the least doubt that the use of this vile compound caused the death of hundreds of the prisoners, when, to allay their tormenting thirst, they were driven by desperation to drink this liquid poison, and to abide the consequences.

CHAPTER XII.

“ DAME GRANT, ” AND HER BOAT

“ At *Brooklyn Wharf*, in travelling trim,
 “ Young CHARON’S boat receives her store ;
 “ Across the wavy waste they skim,
 “ She at the helm, and he, the oar.

“ The market done, her cash secure,
 “ She homeward takes her wonted way ;
 “ The painted chest, behind the door,
 “ Receives the gainings of the day.”

THE MARKET GIRL.

ONE indulgence was allowed us by our keepers, if indulgence it may be called. They had given permission for a boat to come alongside the ship, with a supply of a few necessary articles, to be sold to such of the prisoners as possessed the means of paying for them.

This trade was carried on by a very corpulent old woman, known among the prisoners by the name of “ Dame GRANT.” Her visits, which were made on every other day, were of much benefit to us, and, I presume, a source of profit to herself. She brought us soft bread and fruit, with various other articles, such as sugar, tea, etc., all of which she previously put up into small paper parcels, from one ounce to a pound in weight, with the price affixed to each, from which she would never deviate. The bulk of the old lady completely filled the stern sheets of the boat, where she sat, with her box of goods before her, from which she supplied us very expeditiously. Her boat was rowed

by two boys, who delivered to us the articles we had purchased, the price of which we were required first to put into their hands.

When our guard was not composed of Refugees, we were usually permitted to descend to the foot of the Accommodation-ladder, in order to select from the boat such articles as we wished. While standing there, it was distressing to see the faces of hundreds of half-famished wretches, looking over the side of the ship into the boat, without the means of purchasing the most trifling article before their sight, not even so much as a morsel of wholesome bread. None of us possessed the means of generosity, nor had any power to afford them relief. Whenever I bought any articles from the boat, I never enjoyed them; for it was impossible to do so, in the presence of so many needy wretches, eagerly gazing at my purchase, and almost dying for want of it.

We frequently furnished "Dame GRANT" with a memorandum of such articles as we wished her to procure for us, such as pipes, tobacco, needles, thread, and combs. These she always faithfully procured and brought to us, never omitting the assurance that she afforded them exactly *at cost*.¹

Her arrival was always a subject of interest to us; but at length she did not make her appearance for several days, and her approach was awaited in extreme anxiety. But, alas! we were no longer to enjoy this little gratification. Her traffic was ended. She had taken the fever from the hulk, and died, if not in the flower of her youth, at least in the midst of her usefulness, leaving a void which was never afterwards filled up.

¹ Reference was made to this traffic with the prisoners, by Rev. Mr. SHERBURN (*Memoirs*, 109).

CHAPTER XIII.

OUR SUPPLIES.

“ On the hard floors, these wasted objects laid,
“ There tossed and tumbled in the dismal shade.
“ There no soft voice their bitter fate bemoaned,
“ And Death trod stately while his victims groaned.”

FRENEAU.

AFTER the death of Dame GRANT, we were under the necessity of purchasing from the Sutler such small supplies as we needed. This man was one of the Mates of the ship, and occupied one of the apartments, under the Quarter-deck, through the bulkhead of which an opening had been cut, from which he delivered his goods. He here kept for sale a variety of articles, among which was usually a supply of ardent spirits, which was not allowed to be brought alongside the ship, for sale. It could therefore only be procured from the Sutler, whose price was two dollars for a gallon. Except in relation to this article, no regular price was fixed for what he sold us. We were first obliged to hand him the money, and he then gave us such a quantity as he pleased of the article which we needed; there was on our part no bargain to be made. But to be supplied even in this manner was, to those of us who had means of payment, a great convenience.

But how different was our condition from that of our countrymen who were sent prisoners to England, during the same period. They were also in confinement, it is true,

but it was in prisons, which were palaces in comparison to the foul and putrid dungeons into which we were crowded. They were furnished with sweet and wholesome provisions, and with pure and good water for every necessary purpose. They could easily procure vegetables, and every other supply conducive to their comfort. An Agent was appointed to supply them with clothing, and to attend to their complaints. They had a sufficient space for exercise and manly recreation during the day, and the privilege of using lights by night. They were not so crowded together as to be thereby rendered the almost certain victims of disease and death. They received donations from the charitable and the well-disposed. Such was *their* situation, in a foreign country, in the land of our enemies. What a contrast does this present to the picture I have attempted to give of *our* condition, while confined on our own waters, and in sight of our own shore! Our own people afforded us no relief. Oh, my country! why were we thus neglected in this our hour of misery;—why was not a little food and raiment given to the dying martyrs of thy cause?¹

¹ The condition of the Americans who were prisoners of war in England was not understood by Captain DRING.

On the twentieth of June, 1781, Mr. Fox, in the House of Commons, brought up a petition from the American prisoners in the Mill-prison, Plymouth, setting forth that they were treated with less humanity than the French and Spaniards, and that they had not a sufficient allowance of bread, and were very scantily furnished with clothing, and moved its reference to a Committee, and that testimony be taken on the subject. The Ministry opposed the motion, when Mr. BURKE aptly remarked that, although an Act of Parliament could establish the assize of bread, it could not limit the size of a man's stomach, and called on the Ministry to measure the prisoners' appetites by their own.

At a subsequent date, testimony was taken, when it was shown that the Americans received only two-thirds of the allowance which was made to the prisoners of other nations, and that they were treated generally with greater inhumanity.

Although the supplies which some of us were enabled to procure from the Sutler were highly conducive to our comfort, yet one most necessary article neither himself nor any other person could furnish us. This was wood for our daily cooking, to procure a sufficient quantity of which was to us a source of continual trouble and anxiety. The Cooks would indeed steal small quantities and sell them to us, at the hazard of certain punishment, if detected; but it was not in their power to embezzle a sufficient quantity to meet our daily necessities. As the disgust of swallowing any food which had been cooked in the Great Copper was universal, each prisoner used every exertion to procure as much wood as possible, for the private cooking of his own mess.

During my excursion to the shore, to assist in the interment of Mr. CARVER, it was my good fortune to find a hogshead stave floating in the water. This was truly a prize. I conveyed the treasure on board; and, in the economical manner in which it was used, it furnished the mess to which I belonged with a supply of fuel for a considerable time.

I was also truly fortunate on another occasion. I had, one day, command of the Working-party, which was then employed in taking on board a sloop-load of wood for the ship's use. This was carefully conveyed below, under a

Mr. FOX, Admiral KEPPEL, Mr. BURKE, and General BURGOYNE participated in the debate which followed, in opposition to the Ministry and in favor of the prisoners; while Lord NORTH and his colleagues were compelled to excuse the evil to the best of their ability.

A similar petition was presented in the House of Lords, by the Duke of Richmond, in which the same facts were set forth, and subsequently proven.

Reference may also be made to the outrages committed on American naval prisoners, which were described in a card published by Captain DANIEL DESHON, and others, in *The [Boston] Continental Journal* of the thirtieth of May, 1782.

guard, to prevent embezzlement. I nevertheless found means, with the assistance of my associates, to convey a cleft of it into the Gun-room, where it was immediately secreted. Our mess was thereby supplied with a sufficient quantity for a long time, and its members were considered by far the most wealthy persons in all this republic of misery. We had enough for our own use, and were enabled, occasionally, to supply our neighbors with a few splinters.

Our mode of preparing the wood for use was to cut it with a jack-knife into pieces about four inches long. This labor occupied much of our time, and was performed by the different members of the mess, in rotation; which employment was to us a source of no little pleasure.

After a sufficient quantity had been thus prepared for the next day's use, it was deposited in the chest. The main stock was guarded, by day and night, with the most scrupulous and anxious care. We kept it at night within our own enclosure; and by day it was always watched by some one of its proprietors. So highly did we value it, that we went into mathematical calculations, to ascertain how long it would supply us, if a given quantity was each day consumed.

It may be thought that this subject is not of sufficient importance to be so long dwelt upon. But things which are usually of trifling worth may, at times, become objects of the greatest consequence. Men may be placed in situations where the flint is of more value than the diamond.

CHAPTER XIV.

OUR BY-LAWS.

“What though the sun, in his meridian blaze,
 “Darts on their naked limbs his scorching rays;
 “Still, of ethereal temper are their souls,
 “And in their veins the tide of honor rolls.”

DAY.

SOON after the *Jersey* was first used as a place of confinement, a code of By-laws had been established by the prisoners, for their own regulation and government; to which a willing submission was paid, so far as circumstances would permit. I much regret my inability to give these rules verbatim; but I cannot, at this distant period of time, recollect them with a sufficient degree of distinctness. They were chiefly directed to the preservation of personal cleanliness, and the prevention of immorality. For a refusal to comply with any one of them, the refractory prisoner was subject to a stated punishment. It is an astonishing fact that any rules, thus made, should have so long existed and been enforced among a multitude of men situated as we were,—so numerous, and composed of individuals of that class of human beings who are not easily controlled, and usually not the most ardent supporters of good order. There were many foreigners among our number, over whom we had no control, except so far as they chose voluntarily to comply with our regulations, which

they cheerfully did, in almost every instance, so far as their condition would allow.

Among our rules were the following:—That personal cleanliness should be preserved, as far as was practicable; that profane language should be avoided; that drunkenness should not be allowed; that theft should be severely punished; and that no smoking should be permitted between decks, by day or night, on account of the annoyance which it caused to the sick.

A due observance of the Sabbath was also strongly enjoined; and it was recommended to every individual to appear cleanly shaved on Sunday morning, and to refrain from all recreation during the day. This rule was particularly recommended to the attention of the officers, and the remainder of the prisoners were desired to follow their example.

Our By-laws were occasionally read to the assembled prisoners, and always whenever any prisoner was to be punished for their violation. Theft or fraud upon the allowance of a fellow-prisoner was always punished, and the infliction was always approved by the whole company. On these occasions, the oldest officer among the prisoners presided as Judge.

It required much exertion for many of us to comply with the law prohibiting smoking between decks. Being myself much addicted to the habit of smoking, it would have been a great privilege to have enjoyed the liberty of thus indulging it, particularly during the night, while sitting by one of the air-ports; but as this was entirely inadmissible, I of course submitted to the prohibition.

Many of us waited in great anxiety for the moment when we could ascend to the upper deck and enjoy the gratifica-

tion of our favorite habit. The practice had, indeed, become universal among the prisoners, at least as many of them as had the means of procuring tobacco. We were allowed no means of striking fire, and were obliged to procure it from the Cook employed for the ship's officers, through a small window in the bulkhead, near the caboose. After one had thus procured fire, the rest were also soon supplied, and our pipes were all in full operation in the course of a few minutes. The smoke which rose around us appeared to purify the pestilential air by which we were surrounded; and I attributed the preservation of my health, in a great degree, to the exercise of this habit. Our greatest difficulty was to procure tobacco. This, to some of the prisoners, was impossible; and it must have been an aggravation to their sufferings, to see us apparently puffing away our sorrows, while they had no means of procuring the enjoyment of a similar gratification.

We dared not often apply at this Cook's caboose for fire, as the surly wretch would not willingly repeat the supply. One morning, I went to the window of his den, and requested leave to light my pipe; and the miscreant, without making any reply, threw a shovelful of burning cinders in my face. I was almost blinded by the pain; and several days elapsed before I fully regained my sight. My feelings on this occasion may be imagined; but redress was impossible, as we were allowed no mode of even seeking it. I mention this occurrence to show to what a wretched state we were reduced, when thus exposed to the wanton and vexatious insults, the petty and disgusting tyranny of all those wretches, from the Commissary to the Cook and the Cook's scullion. This wanton act of that inhuman monster would not probably have been justified by the Captain,

had it come to his knowledge ; but it was wholly out of our power to devise means whereby to convey any complaint to him. Had the means been allowed us of making known our grievances, many of these brutal aggressions would probably have been punished, and we should have been saved from the endurance of a great number of petty, but unceasing insults.

CHAPTER XV.

OUR ORATOR.

———“Stranger Youth;
 “So noble and so mild is thy demeanor,
 “So gentle and so patient; such the air
 “Of candor and of courage which adorns
 “Thy manly features, thou hast won my love.”

H. MOORE.

DURING the period of my confinement, the *Jersey* was never visited by any regular clergyman, nor was Divine service ever performed on board. And among the whole multitude of the prisoners, there was but one individual who ever attempted to deliver a set speech, or to exhort his fellow-sufferers.

This individual was a young man named COOPER, whose station in life was apparently that of a common sailor. He was a man of eccentric character, but evidently possessed talents of a very high order. His manners were pleasing, and he had every appearance of having received an excellent education. He was a Virginian; but I never learned the exact place of his nativity. He told us that he had been a very unmanageable youth, and that he had left his family, contrary to their wishes and advice; that he had been often assured by them that the *Old Jersey* would bring him up at last, and the Wale bogt be his place of burial. “The first of these predictions,” said he, “has been

“verified; and I care not how soon the second proves
“equally true, for I am prepared for the event. Death,
“for me, has lost its terrors, for with them I have been too
“long familiar.”

On several Sunday mornings, COOPER harangued the prisoners in a very forcible yet pleasing manner, which, together with his language, made a lasting impression upon my memory. On one of these occasions, having mounted a temporary elevation on the Spar-deck, he, in an audible voice, requested the attention of the prisoners, who having immediately gathered round him in silence, he commenced his discourse.

He began by saying that he hoped no one would suppose he had taken that station by way of derision or mockery of that holy day, for that such was not his object; on the contrary, he was pleased to find that the good regulations established by the former prisoners obliged us to refrain even from recreation on the Sabbath; that his object, however, was not to preach to us, nor to discourse upon any sacred subject. He wished to read us our By-laws, a copy of which he held in his hand, the framers of which were then, in all probability, sleeping in death, beneath the sand of the shore before our eyes. That these laws had been framed in wisdom, and were well fitted to preserve order and decorum in a community like ours; that his present object was to impress upon our minds the absolute necessity of a strict adherence to those wholesome regulations; that he should briefly comment upon each article, which might be thus considered as the particular text of that part of his discourse.

He proceeded to point out the extreme necessity of a full observance of these Rules of Conduct, and portrayed the

evil consequences which would inevitably result to us if we neglected or suffered them to fall into disuse. He enforced the necessity of our unremitted attention to personal cleanliness and to the duties of morality; he dwelt on the degradation and sin of drunkenness; described the meanness and atrocity of theft, and the high degree of caution against temptation necessary for men who were perhaps standing on the very brink of the grave; and added, that, in his opinion, even sailors might as well refrain from profane language, while they were actually suffering in Purgatory.

He said that our present torments, in that abode of misery, were a proper retribution for our former sins and transgressions; that Satan had been permitted to send out his messengers and inferior demons in every direction, to collect us together; and that among the most active of these infernal agents was DAVID SPROAT, Commissary of Prisoners.

He then made some just and suitable observations on the fortitude with which we had sustained the weight of our accumulated miseries; of our firmness in refusing to accept the bribes of our invaders, and desert the banners of our country. During this part of his discourse, the sentinels on the gangways occasionally stopped and listened attentively. We much feared that, by some imprudent remark, he might expose himself to their resentment, and cautioned him not to proceed too far. He replied, that our keepers could do nothing more, unless they should put him to the torture, and that he should proceed.

He touched on the fact that no clergyman had ever visited us; that this was probably owing to the fear of contagion; but it was much to be regretted that no one had

ever come to afford a ray of hope, or to administer the Word of Life in that terrific abode; that if any Minister of the Gospel desired to do so, there could be no obstacle in the way, for that even DAVID SPROAT himself, bad as he was, would not dare to oppose it.

He closed with a merited tribute to the memory of those of our fellow-sufferers who had already paid the debt of nature. "The time," said he, "will come when their bones "will be collected, when their rites of sepulture will be "performed, and a monument erected over the remains of "those who have here suffered, the victims of barbarity, "and died in vindication of the rights of Man."

I have myself lived to see his predictions verified. Those bones have been collected; those rites have been performed; that monument has been raised.¹

The remarks of our Orator were well adapted to our situation, and produced much effect upon the prisoners, who at length began to accost him as "Elder," or "Parson "COOPER." But this he would not allow; and told us, if we would insist on giving him a title, we might call him "Doctor;" by which name he was ever afterwards saluted, so long as he remained among us.

He had been a prisoner for about the period of three months, when one day the Commissary of Prisoners came on board, accompanied by a stranger, and inquired for COOPER, who having made his appearance, a letter was put into his hand, which he perused, and immediately afterwards left the ship, without even going below for his clothing. While in the boat, he waved his hand, and bade us be of good cheer. We could only return a mute farewell; and

¹ Concerning the monument, Captain DRING had been misinformed. No monument has yet been erected.

in a few moments the boat had left the ship, and was on its way to New York.

Thus we lost our Orator, for whom I had a very high regard at the time, and whose character and manners have, ever since, been to me a subject of pleasing recollection.

Various were the conjectures which the sudden manner of his departure caused on board. Some asserted that poor COOPER had drawn upon himself the vengeance of old SPROAT, and that he had been carried on shore to be punished. No certain information was ever received respecting him; but I have always thought that he was a member of some highly influential and respectable family, and that his release had been effected through the agency of his friends. This was often done by the influence of the Royalists' or Refugees in New York, who were sometimes the connections or personal friends of those who applied for their assistance in procuring the liberation of a son or a brother from captivity. Such kind offices were thus frequently rendered to those who had chosen opposite sides in the great revolutionary contest; and to whom, though directly opposed to themselves in political proceedings, they were willing to render every personal service in their power.

¹ Vide page 70, note, *ante*.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE FOURTH OF JULY.

“Black as the clouds that shade St. Kilda’s shore,
“Wild as the wind that round her mountains roar,
“At every post, some surly vagrant stands,
“Cull’d from the English or the Scottish bands.
“Dispensing death, triumphantly they stand;
“Their muskets ready to obey command,
“Wounds are their sport, as ruin is their aim;
“On their dark souls, compassion has no claim;
“And discord only ean their spirits please;
“Such were our tyrants; only, such as these.”

FRENEAU.

A FEW days before the fourth of July, we had made such preparations as our circumstances would admit, for an observance of the anniversary of American Independence. We had procured some supplies wherewith to make ourselves merry on the occasion, and intended to spend the day in such innocent pastime and amusement as our situation would afford, not dreaming that our proceedings would give umbrage to our keepers, as it was far from our intention to trouble or insult them. We thought that, although prisoners, we had a right, on that day at least, to sing and be merry. As soon as we were permitted to go on deck in the morning, thirteen little national flags were displayed in a row upon the booms. We were soon ordered by the guard to take them away; and as we neglected to obey the command, they triumphantly demolished, and trampled them under foot.

Unfortunately for us, our guards at that time were Scotchmen, who, next to the Refugees, were the objects of our greatest hatred; but their destruction of our flags was merely viewed in silence, with the contempt which it merited.

During the time we remained on deck, several patriotic songs were sung, and choruses were repeated; but not a word was intentionally spoken to give offence to our guards. They were, nevertheless, evidently dissatisfied with our proceedings, as will soon appear. Their moroseness was a prelude to what was to follow. We were, in a short time, forbidden to pass along the common gangways, and every attempt to do so was repelled by the bayonet. Although thus incommoded, our mirth still continued. Songs were still sung, accompanied with occasional cheers. Things thus proceeded until about four o'clock; when the guards were turned out, and we received orders to descend between decks, where we were immediately driven, at the point of the bayonet.

After being thus sent below in the greatest confusion, at that early and unusual hour, and having heard the gratings closed and fastened above us, we supposed that the barbarous resentment of our guards was fully satisfied; but we were mistaken, for they had further vengeance in store, and merely waited for an opportunity to make us feel its weight.

The prisoners continued their singing between decks, and were, of course, more noisy than usual, but forbore, even under their existing temptations, to utter any insulting or aggravating expressions. At least, I heard nothing of the kind, unless our patriotic songs could be so construed.

In the course of the evening, we were ordered to desist

from making any further noise. This order not being fully complied with, at about nine o'clock the gratings were removed, and the guards descended among us, with lanterns and drawn cutlasses in their hands. The poor, helpless prisoners retreated from the hatchways as far as their crowded situation would permit; while their cowardly assailants followed as far as they dared, cutting and wounding every one within their reach, and then ascended to the upper deck, exulting in the gratification of their revenge.

Many of the prisoners were wounded; but, from the total darkness, neither their number nor their situation could be ascertained; and if this had been possible, it was not in the power of their companions to afford them the least relief. During the whole of that tragical night, their groans and lamentations were dreadful in the extreme. Being in the Gun-room, I was at some distance from the immediate scene of this bloody outrage; but the distance was by no means far enough to prevent my hearing their continual cries from the extremity of pain, their applications for assistance, and their curses upon the heads of their brutal assailants.

It had been the usual custom for each prisoner to carry below, when he descended at sunset, a pint of water, to quench his thirst during the night. But, on this occasion, we had thus been driven to our dungeons three hours before the setting of the sun, and without our usual supply of water.

Of this night I cannot describe the horrors. The day had been very sultry, and the heat was extreme throughout the ship. The unusual number of hours during which we had been crowded together between decks; the foul atmosphere and sickening heat; the additional excitement and

restlessness caused by the wanton attack which had been made; above all, the want of water, not a drop of which could be obtained, during the whole night, to cool our parched tongues; the imprecations of those who were half-distracted with their burning thirst; the shrieks and wailings of the wounded, the struggles and groans of the dying, together formed a combination of horrors which no pen can describe.

In the agonies of their suffering, the prisoners invited, and even challenged, their inhuman guards to descend once more among them; but this they were prudent enough not to attempt.

Their cries and supplications for water were terrible, and were, of themselves, sufficient to render sleep impossible. Oppressed with the heat, I found my way to the grating of the main hatchway, where on former nights I had frequently passed some time, for the benefit of the little current of air which circulated through the bars. I obtained a place on the larboard side of the hatchway, where I stood facing the East, and endeavored, as much as possible, to draw my attention from the terrific sounds below me, by watching through the grating the progress of the stars. I there spent hour after hour in following with my eye the motion of a particular star, as it rose and ascended until it passed over beyond my sight.

How I longed for the day to dawn! At length the morning light began to appear, but still our torments were increasing every moment. As the usual hour for us to ascend to the upper deck approached, the Working-party were mustered near the hatchway, and we were all anxiously waiting for the opportunity to cool our weary frames, to breathe for a while the pure air, and, above all,

to procure water to quench our intolerable thirst. The time arrived, but still the gratings were not removed. Hour after hour passed on, and still we were not released. Our minds were at length seized with the horrible suspicion that our tyrants had determined to make a finishing stroke of their cruelty, and rid themselves of us altogether.

It was not until ten o'clock in the forenoon that the gratings were at length removed. We hurried on deck, and thronged to the water-cask, which was completely exhausted before our thirst was allayed. So great was the struggle around the cask, that the guards were again turned out to disperse the crowd.

In a few hours, however, we received a new supply of water, but it seemed impossible to allay our thirst, and the applications at the cask were incessant until sunset.

Our rations were delivered to us, but, of course, not until long after the usual hour. During the whole day, however, no fire was kindled for cooking in the Galley. All the food which we consumed that day we were obliged to swallow raw. Every thing, indeed, had been entirely deranged by the events of the past night, and several days elapsed before order was restored. This was at length obtained by a change of the guard, who, to our great joy, were relieved by a party of Hessians.

The average number who died on board during the period of twenty-four hours was about five; but on the morning of the fifth of July, eight or ten corpses were found below. Many had been badly wounded, to whom, in the total darkness of the night, it was impossible for their companions to render any assistance; and even during the next day they received no attention, except that which was afforded by their fellow-prisoners, who had nothing to

administer to their comfort, not even bandages for their wounds.

I was not personally acquainted with any of those who died or were wounded on that night. No equal number had ever died in the same period of time during my confinement. This unusual mortality was of course caused by the increased sufferings of the night.

Since that time, I have often, while standing on the deck of a good ship under my command, and viewing the rising stars, thought upon the terrors of that night, when I stood watching their progress through the gratings of the *Old Jersey*. And when I now contrast my former wretchedness with my present situation, in the full enjoyment of liberty, health, and every earthly comfort, I cannot but muse upon the contrast, and bless the great and good Being from whom my comforts have been derived. I do not now regret my captivity nor my sufferings; for the recollection of them has ever taught me how to enjoy my after life with a greater degree of contentment than I should, perhaps, have otherwise ever experienced.

CHAPTER XVII.

AN ATTEMPT TO ESCAPE.

“ Better the greedy wave should swallow all,
“ Better to meet the death-conducting ball,
“ Better to sleep on ocean’s oozy bed,
“ At once destroy’d and number’d with the dead;
“ Than thus to perish in the face of day,
“ Where twice ten thousand deaths one death delay.”

FRENEAU.

IT had been some time in contemplation, among a few of the inmates of the Gun-room, to make a desperate attempt to escape, by cutting a hole through the stern or counter of the ship. In order that their operations might proceed with even the least probability of success, it was absolutely necessary that but few of the prisoners should be admitted to the secret. At the same time, it was impossible for them to make any progress in their labor unless they first confided their plan to all the other occupants of the Gun-room; which was accordingly done. In this part of the ship, each mess was on terms of more or less intimacy with those whose little sleeping enclosures were immediately adjacent to their own; and the members of each mess frequently interchanged good offices with those in their vicinity, and borrowed and lent such little articles as they possessed, like the good housewives of a sociable neighborhood. I never knew any contention in this apart-

ment during the whole period of my confinement. Each individual in the Gun-room, therefore, was willing to assist his comrades as far as he had the power to do so. When the proposed plan of escape was laid before us, although it met the disapprobation of by far the greater number, still we were all perfectly ready to assist those who thought it practicable.

We, however, described to them the difficulties and dangers which must unavoidably attend their undertaking; the prospect of detection while making the aperture in the immediate vicinity of such a multitude of idle men, crowded together, a large proportion of whom were always kept awake by their restlessness and sufferings during the night; the little probability that they would be able to travel, undiscovered, on Long Island, even should they succeed in reaching the shore in safety; and, above all, the almost absolute impossibility of obtaining food for their subsistence, as an application for that to our keepers would certainly lead to detection. But, notwithstanding all our arguments, a few of them remained determined to make the attempt. Their only reply to our reasoning was, that they must die if they remained; and that nothing worse could befall them if they failed in their undertaking.

One of the most sanguine among the adventurers was a young man named LAWRENCE, the Mate of a ship from Philadelphia. He was a member of the mess next to my own, and I had formed with him a very intimate acquaintance. He frequently explained his plans to me; and dwelt much upon his hopes of success. But ardently as I desired to obtain my liberty, and great as were the exertions I would have made, had I seen any probable mode of gaining it, yet it was not my intention to join in this attempt. I

nevertheless agreed to assist in the labor of cutting through the planks; and heartily wished, although I had no hope, that the enterprise might prove successful.

The work was accordingly commenced, and the laborers concealed by placing a blanket between them and the prisoners without. The counter of the ship was covered with hard oak plank, four inches thick; and through this we undertook to cut an opening sufficiently large for a man to descend; and to do this with no other tools than our jack-knives and a single gimlet.

All the occupants of the Gun-room assisted in this labor, in rotation: some in confidence that the plan was practicable, and the rest merely for amusement, or for the sake of being employed. Some one of our number was constantly at work; and we thus continued, wearing a hole through the hard planks, from seam to seam, until at length the solid oak was worn away piecemeal, and nothing remained but a thin sheathing on the outside, which could be cut away at any time in a few minutes, whenever a suitable opportunity should occur for making the bold attempt to leave the ship.

It had been previously agreed, that those who should first descend through the aperture should drop into the water, and there remain until all those among the inmates of the Gun-room who chose to make the attempt could join them; and that the whole band of adventurers should then swim together to the shore, which was about a quarter of a mile from the ship.

A proper time at length arrived. On a very dark and rainy night, the exterior sheathing was cut away; and at midnight, four of our number, having disencumbered themselves of their clothes, and tied them across their shoulders,

were assisted through the opening, and dropped, one after another, into the water.

Ill-fated men! Our guards had long been acquainted with the enterprise. But, instead of taking any measures to prevent it, they had permitted us to go on with our labor, keeping a vigilant watch for the moment of our projected escape, in order to gratify their blood-thirsty wishes. No other motive than this could have prompted them to the course which they pursued. A boat was in waiting under the ship's quarter, manned with rowers and a party of the guards. They maintained a perfect silence after hearing the prisoners drop from the opening; until, having ascertained that no more would probably descend, they pursued the swimmers, whose course they could easily follow by the sparkling of the water—an effect always produced by the agitation of the waves in a stormy night.

We were all profoundly silent in the Gun-room, after the departure of our companions, and in anxious suspense as to the issue of their adventure. In a few minutes, we were startled by the report of a gun, which was instantly succeeded by a quick and scattering fire of musketry. In the darkness of the night, we could not see the unfortunate victims; but could distinctly hear their shrieks and cries for mercy.

The noise of the firing had alarmed the prisoners generally; and the report of the attempted escape and its defeat ran like wildfire through the gloomy and crowded dungeons of the hulk, and produced much commotion among the whole body of the prisoners. In a few moments, the gratings were raised, and the guards descended, bearing a naked and bleeding man, whom they placed in one of the bunks; and having left a piece of burning candle by his

side, they again ascended to the deck, and secured the gratings.

Information of this circumstance soon reached the Gun-room; and myself, with several others of our number, succeeded in making our way through the crowd to the bunks. The wounded man was my friend LAWRENCE. He was severely injured in many places, and one of his arms had been nearly severed from his body by the stroke of a cutlass. This, he said, was done in wanton barbarity, while he was crying for mercy, with his hand on the gun-wale of the boat. He was too much exhausted to answer any of our questions; and uttered nothing further, except a single inquiry respecting the fate of NELSON, one of his fellow-adventurers. This we could not answer. Indeed, what became of the rest, we never knew. They were, probably, all murdered in the water.

This was the first time that I had ever seen a light between decks. The piece of candle had been left by the side of the bunk, in order to produce an additional effect upon the prisoners. Many had been suddenly awakened from their slumbers, and had crowded round the bunk where the sufferer lay. The effect of the partial light upon his bleeding and naked limbs, and upon the pale and haggard countenances and tattered garments of the wild and crowded groups by which he was surrounded, was horrid beyond description.

We could render the sufferer but little assistance, being only able to furnish him with a few articles of apparel and to bind a handkerchief around his head. His body was completely covered and his hair filled with clotted blood; we had not the means of washing the gore from his wounds during the night. We had seen many die; but to view

this wretched man expiring in that situation, where he had been placed beyond the reach of surgical aid, merely to strike us with terror, was dreadful.

The gratings were not removed at the usual hour in the morning; but we were all kept below until ten o'clock. This mode of punishment had now become habitual with our keepers, and we were all frequently detained between decks until a late hour in the day, in revenge for the most trifling occurrence. This cruelty never failed to produce the torments arising from heat and thirst, with all their attendant miseries.

The immediate object of our tyrants having been answered by leaving Mr. LAWRENCE below in that situation, they promised in the morning that he should have the assistance of a Surgeon; but this promise was not fulfilled. The prisoners rendered him every attention in their power. They washed and dressed his wounds; but in vain. Mortification soon commenced: he became delirious, and died.

No inquiry was made by our keepers respecting his situation. They evidently left him thus to suffer, in order that the sight of his agonies might deter the rest of the prisoners from following his example.

We received not the least reprimand for this transaction. The aperture was again filled up with plank, and made perfectly secure; and no similar attempt to escape was made—at least so long as I remained on board.

It was always in our power to knock down the guards, and throw them overboard; but this would have been of no avail. If we had done so, and had effected our escape to Long Island, it would have been next to impossible for us to have proceeded any farther, among the number of troops there quartered. Of these, there were several regi-

ments, and among them the regiment of Refugees before mentioned, who were vigilant in the highest degree, and would have been delighted at the opportunity of apprehending and returning us to our dungeons.

There were, however, several instances of individuals making their escape. One in particular I well recollect :—JAMES PITCHER, one of the crew of the *Chance*, was placed on the sick-list, and conveyed to Blackwell's Island. He effected his escape from thence to Long Island; from which, after having used the greatest precaution, he contrived to cross the Sound, and arrived safe at home. He is now one of the three survivors of that vessel's crew.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MEMORIAL TO GENERAL WASHINGTON.

"The body maddened by the spirit's pain,
 "The wild, wild working of the breast and brain,
 "The haggard eye, that horror widened, sees
 "Death take the start of sorrow and disease;
 "Here, such were seen and heard:—so close at hand,
 "A cable's length had reached them from the land;
 "Yet farther off than ocean ever bore;—
 "Eternity between them and the shore!"

W. READ.

NOTWITHSTANDING the destroying pestilence which was now raging to a degree hitherto unknown on board, new companies of victims were continually arriving; so that, although the mortality was very great, our members were increasing daily. Thus situated, and seeing no prospect of our liberation by exchange, we began to despair, and to believe that our certain fate was rapidly approaching.

One expedient was at length proposed among us, and adopted. We petitioned General CLINTON, who was then in command of the British forces at New York, for leave to transmit a Memorial to General WASHINGTON, describing our deplorable situation, and requesting his interference in our behalf. We further desired that our Memorial might be examined by the British General, and, if approved by him, that it might be carried by one of our number to General WASHINGTON.

Our petition was laid before the British commander by the Commissary of Prisoners, and was granted. We received permission to choose three from our number, to whom was promised a passport, with leave to proceed immediately on their embassy.

Our choice was accordingly made, and I had the satisfaction to find that two of those elected were from among the former officers of the *Chance*, Captain ABORN and our Surgeon, Mr. JOSEPH BOWEN.¹

The Memorial was soon completed and signed, in the name of all the prisoners, by a Committee appointed for that purpose. It contained an account of the extreme wretchedness of our condition, and stated, that, although we were sensible that the subject was one over which General WASHINGTON had no direct control, as it was not usual for soldiers to be exchanged for seamen, and his authority not extending to the Marine Department of the American service ; yet still, although it might not be in his power to effect our exchange, we hoped that he would be able to devise some means to lighten or relieve our sufferings.²

Our messengers were further charged with a verbal communication for General WASHINGTON, which, for obvious reasons, was not included in the written Memorial. They were directed to state, in a manner more circumstantial than we had dared to write, the peculiar horrors of our situation ; to describe the miserable food and putrid water

¹ Allusion was made to this Committee from the Prisoners, in the Correspondence between General WASHINGTON and Admiral DIGBY. (Appendix I., No. 6 and Enclosures.)

² This Memorial very clearly sets forth the fact that the prisoners on the *Jersey* were acquainted with the causes which prevented their release, by exchange.

on which we were doomed to subsist; and, finally, to assure the General that in case he could effect our release, we would agree to enter the American service as soldiers, and remain during the war. Thus instructed, our messengers departed.

We waited, in alternate hope and fear, the event of their mission. Most of our number, who were natives of the Eastern States, were strongly impressed with the idea that some means would be devised for our relief, after such a representation of our condition should have been made. This class of the prisoners, indeed, felt most interested in the success of the application; for many of the sufferers appeared to give themselves but little trouble respecting it, and some, among the foreigners, did not even know that such an application had been made, or that it had even been in contemplation. The long endurance of their privations had rendered them almost indifferent to their fate, and they appeared to look forward to death as the only probable termination of their captivity.

In a few days, our messengers returned to New York, with a letter from General WASHINGTON, addressed to the Committee of the prisoners who had signed the Memorial. The prisoners were all summoned to the Spar-deck, where this letter was read. Its purport was as follows:—That he had perused our communication, and had received with due consideration the account which our messengers had laid before him; that he viewed our situation with a high degree of interest; and that although our application (as we had stated) was made in relation to a subject over which he had no direct control, yet that it was his intention to lay our Memorial before Congress; and that, in the mean time, we might be assured that no exertion on his part

should be spared which could tend to a mitigation of our sufferings.

He observed to our messengers, during their interview, that our long detention in confinement was owing to a combination of circumstances, against which it was very difficult, if not impossible, to provide. That, in the first place, but little exertion was made on the part of our countrymen to secure and detain their British prisoners for the purpose of exchange; many of the British seamen being captured by privateers on board which, as he understood, it was a common practice for them to enter as seamen; and that when this was not the case, they were usually set at liberty as soon as the privateer arrived in port; as neither the owners, nor the town or State where they were landed, would be at the expense of their confinement and maintenance; and that the officers of the General Government only took charge of those seamen who were captured by the vessels in the public service. All which circumstances combined to render the number of British prisoners, at all times, by far too small for a regular and equal exchange.

General WASHINGTON also transmitted to our Committee copies of letters which he had sent to General CLINTON and to the Commissary of Prisoners, which were also read to us. He therein expressed an ardent desire that a general exchange of prisoners might be effected; and if this could not be accomplished, he wished that something might be done to lessen the weight of our sufferings; that, if it was absolutely necessary that we should be confined on the water, he desired that we might at least be removed to clean ships. He added, if the Americans should be driven to the necessity of placing the British prisoners in situations

similar to our own, similar effects must be the inevitable result; and that he therefore hoped they would afford us better treatment, from motives of humanity. He concluded by saying, that as a correspondence on the subject had thus begun between them, he ardently wished it might eventually result in the liberation of the unfortunate men whose situation had called for its commencement.

Our three messengers did not return on board as prisoners, but were allowed to remain on parole, at Flatbush, on Long Island.

We soon found an improvement in our fare.¹ The bread which we received was of a better quality, and we were furnished with butter instead of rancid oil. An awning was provided, and a wind-sail furnished to conduct fresh air between the decks during the day. But of this we were always deprived at night, when we most needed it, as the gratings must always be fastened over the hatchways; and I presume that our keepers were fearful, if it was allowed to remain, we might use it as a means of escape.

We were, however, obliged to submit to all our privations, consoling ourselves only with the faint hope that the favorable change in our situation, which we had observed

¹ It is not improbable that this melioration of the condition of the prisoners arose from other causes than the remonstrances of General WASHINGTON.

In this connection, the following may be taken for what it is worth:—

[From *The New-Jersey Gazette*, Vol. V. Numb. 239, Trenton, Wednesday, July 24, 1782.]

“NEW-LONDON, June 21.

“We are informed that Sir Guy Carleton has visited all the prison-ships at New-York, minutely examined into the situation of the prisoners, and expressed his intentions of having them better provided for: That they were to be landed on Blackwell’s Island, in New-York harbour in the day-time, during the hot season.”

for the last few days, might lead to something still more beneficial; although we saw but little prospect of escaping from the raging pestilence, except through the immediate interposition of divine Providence, or by a removal from the scene of contagion.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE EXCHANGE.

"The captive raised his slow and sullen eye;
 "He knew no friend, nor deemed a friend was nigh;
 "Till the sweet tones of Pity touched his ears,
 "And Mercy bathed his bosom with her tears.
 "Strange were those tones, to him, those tears were strange;
 "He wept, and wondered at the mighty change.
 * * * * * * *
 "Like PETER, sleeping in his chains, he lay;
 "The angel came, and night was turned to day;
 "'Arise!'—his fetters fall; his slumbers flee;
 "He wakes to life; he springs to liberty!"

MONTGOMERY.

SOON after Captain ABORN had been permitted to go to Long Island on his parole, he sent a message on board the *Jersey*, informing us that his parole had been extended so far as to allow his return home, but that he should visit us previous to his departure. He requested our First Lieutenant, Mr. JOHN TILLINGHAST, to provide a list of the names of those captured in the *Chance* who had died, and also a list of the survivors, noting where each survivor was then confined, whether on board the *Jersey*, or one of the Hospital-ships.

He also requested that those of our number who desired to write to their friends at home, would have their letters ready for delivery to him, whenever he should come on board. The occupants of the Gun-room, and such of the

other prisoners as could procure the necessary materials, were, therefore, soon busily engaged in writing as particular descriptions of our situation as they thought it prudent to do, without the risk of the destruction of their letters; as we were always obliged to submit our writing for inspection previous to its being allowed to pass from the ship. We, however, afterwards regretted that on this occasion our descriptions were not more minute, as these letters were not examined.

The next day, Captain ABORN came on board, accompanied by several other persons, who had also been liberated on parole; but they came no nearer to the prisoners than the head of the gangway ladder, and passed through the door of the barricado to the Quarter-deck.¹ This was, perhaps, a necessary precaution against the contagion, as they were more liable to be affected by it than if they had always remained on board; but we were much disappointed at not having an opportunity to speak to them. Our letters were delivered to Captain ABORN by our Lieutenant, through whom he sent us assurances of his determination to do every thing in his power for our relief; and that, if a sufficient number of British prisoners could be procured, every survivor of his vessel's crew should be exchanged; and if this could not be effected, we might depend on receiving clothing, and such other necessary articles as could be sent for our use.

About this time, some of the sick were sent ashore on Blackwell's Island. This was considered a great indulgence. I endeavored to obtain leave to join them, by feigning sickness, but did not succeed. The removal of the

¹ Probably the visit of the Committee of Officers referred to in Appendix I., Nos. 7, 8, 9, and 10.

sick was a great relief to us, as the air was less foul between decks, and we had more room for motion. Some of the bunks were removed, and the sick were carried on shore as soon as their condition was known. Still, however, the pestilence did not abate on board, as the weather was extremely warm. In the daytime, the heat was excessive, but at night it was intolerable.

But we lived on hope, knowing that, in all probability, our friends at home had ere then been apprised of our condition; and that some relief might perhaps be soon afforded us.

Such was our situation, when, one day, a short time before sunset, we descried a sloop approaching us, with a white flag at her mast-head, and knew, by that signal, that she was a Cartel; and, from the direction in which she came, supposed her to be from some of the Eastern States. She did not approach near enough to satisfy our curiosity, until we were ordered below for the night.

Long were the hours of that night to the survivors of our crew. Slight as was the foundation on which our hopes had been raised, we had clung to them as our last resource. No sooner were the gratings removed in the morning, than we were all upon deck, gazing at the Cartel. Her deck was crowded with men, whom we supposed to be British prisoners. In a few minutes, they began to enter the Commissary's boats, and proceeded to New York.

In the afternoon, a boat from the Cartel came alongside the hulk, having on board the Commissary of Prisoners; and by his side sat our townsman, Captain WILLIAM COREY, who came on board with the joyful information that the sloop was from Providence, with English prisoners, to be exchanged for the crew of the *Chance*. The number which

she had brought was forty,¹ being more than sufficient to redeem every survivor of our crew then on board the *Jersey*.

I immediately began to prepare for my departure. Having placed the few articles of clothing which I possessed in a bag (for, by one of our By-laws, no prisoner, when liberated, could remove his chest), I proceeded to dispose of my other property on board, and after having made sundry small donations of less value, I concluded by

¹ Compare this statement of the number of prisoners exchanged on this occasion with that portion of the following description which relates to the prisoners brought from Providence, and with that which follows, showing the number which arrived at that place after the debarkation, at Barrington, of young BICKNELL:—

I. [From *The Royal Gazette*, No. 605, New-York, Wednesday, July 17, 1782.]

“*The following is a State of the*

“*N A V Y P R I S O N E R S,*

“*who have within the last twelve days been exchanged, and brought to this city, viz*

“ <i>From Boston</i>	102	} <i>British Seamen.</i>
“ <i>Rhode-Island</i>	40	
“ <i>New-London</i>	84	
“ <i>Baltimore (Maryland)</i>	23	
“ <i>Total</i>	249	

“*The exertions of those American Captains who published to the world, in this Gazette, dated July 3d, the real state and condition of their countrymen, prisoners here, and the true cause of their duranee and sufferings, we are informed was greatly conducive to the bringing this exchange into an happy effect. We have only to lament that the endeavours of those who went, for the same laudable purpose, to Philadelphia, have not hitherto been so fortunate.*”

II. [From *The Pennsylvania Pucket or, the General Advertiser*, Vol. XI. Numb. 924, Philadelphia, Thursday, August 15, 1782.]

“*PROVIDENCE, July 27.*

“*Sunday last a flag of truce returned here from New-York, and brought 39 prisoners.*”

giving my tin kettle to one of my friends, and to another the remnant of my cleft of fire-wood.

I then hurried to the upper deck, in order to be ready to answer to my name, well knowing that I should hear no second call, and that no delay would be allowed.

The Commissary and Captain COREY were standing together on the Quarter-deck; and as the list of names was read, our Lieutenant, Mr. TILLINGHAST, was directed to say whether the person called was one of the crew of the *Chance*. As soon as this assurance was given, the individual was ordered to pass down the Accommodation-ladder into the boat. Cheerfully was the word "Here!" responded by each survivor as his name was called. My own turn at length came, and the Commissary pointed to the boat. I never moved with a lighter step, for that moment was the happiest of my life. In the excess and overflowing of my joy, I forgot, for a while, the detestable character of the Commissary himself; and even, Heaven forgive me! bestowed a bow upon him as I passed.

We took our stations in the boat in silence. No congratulations were heard among us. Our feelings were too deep for utterance. For my own part, I could not refrain from bursting into tears of joy.

Still there were intervals when it seemed impossible that we were in reality without the limits of the *Old Jersey*. We dreaded the idea that some unforeseen event might still detain us; and shuddered with the apprehension that we might yet be returned to our dungeons.

When the Cartel arrived, the surviving number of our crew on board the *Jersey* was but thirty-five. This fact being well known to Mr. TILLINGHAST, and finding that the Cartel had brought forty prisoners, he allowed five of our

companions in the Gun-room to answer to the names of the same number of our crew who had died ; and having disguised themselves in the garb of common seamen, they passed unsuspected.

It was nearly sunset when we had all arrived on board the Cartel. No sooner had the exchange been completed, than the Commissary left us, with our prayers that we might never behold him more. I then cast my eyes towards the hulk, as the horizontal rays of the setting sun glanced on her polluted sides, where, from the bends upwards, filth of every description had been permitted to accumulate for years ; and the feelings of disgust which the sight occasioned are indescribable. The multitude on her Spar-deck and Forecastle were in motion, and in the act of descending for the night ; presenting the same appearance that met my sight when, nearly five months before, I had, at the same hour, approached her as a prisoner.

CHAPTER XX.

THE CARTEL.

“At length returned unto my native shore,
“How changed I find those scenes which pleased before.
“In sickly ships, what num’rous hosts confined,
“At once, their lives and liberties resigned.
“In dreary dungeons, woful scenes have passed;
“Long in tradition shall the story last:
“As long as Spring renews the flowery wood,
“Or Summer’s breezes curl the yielding flood.”

FRENEAU.

“**D**OWN, Rebels, down!” was the insulting mandate by which we had usually been sent below for the night; and now, as we stood on the deck of the Cartel, watching the setting sun, I could hardly persuade myself that I should not soon hear that unfeeling order shouted forth by some ruffian sentinel behind me.

During the evening, every thing around us contributed to our gratification. It was a pleasure to us even to look at the lighted candles; for, except on the night of the attempted escape, described in a former chapter, we had not seen any thing of the kind for months. We derived enjoyment from gazing at the stars, not one of which we had seen, in its zenith, since our capture, having never been permitted to look abroad in the night, except through the massy gratings or iron bars of our prison.

We had no desire for sleep, and the whole night was

spent in conversation, during which I learned the particular circumstances in relation to our exchange.

On his arrival at Providence, Captain ABORN had lost no time in making the details of our sufferings publicly known; and a feeling of deep commiseration was excited among our fellow-citizens. MESSRS. CLARKE & NIGHTINGALE, the former owners of the *Chance*,¹ in conjunction with other gentlemen, expressed their determination to spare no exertion or expense necessary to procure our liberation. It was found that forty British prisoners were at that time in Boston. These were immediately procured, and marched to Providence, where a sloop, owned and commanded by a Captain GLADDING, of Bristol, was chartered, to proceed with the prisoners forthwith to New York, that they might be exchanged for an equal number of our crew. Captain COREY was appointed as an Agent to effect the exchange and to receive us from the *Jersey*; and having taken on board a supply of good provisions and water, he hastened to our relief. He received much assistance in effecting his object from our townsman, Mr. JOHN CREED, at that time Deputy-commissary of Prisoners. I do not recollect the exact day of our deliverance, but think it was early in the month of October, 1782.²

¹ CLARKE & NIGHTINGALE was the style of one of the best-known commercial houses in America, during the latter part of the last century.

Mr. CLARKE resided on Benefit street, Providence, in a house which occupied the site on which the residence of THOMAS C. HOPPIN, Esq., now stands. His two daughters were married, one to OLIVER KANE, Esq., of New-York; the other to Professor HARE, of Philadelphia.

Mr. NIGHTINGALE resided in the mansion, on Benefit street, Providence, which is now occupied by JOHN CARTER BROWN, Esq.

² Concerning the probable date of the release of the crew of the *Chance*, it is proper to take some notice, in view of this opinion of Captain DRING.

The extract from *The Royal Gazette*, of the seventeenth of July (*ante*, 111,

The sun rose brightly on the morning after our exchange. We spent the time while our breakfast was preparing in viewing once more the detested place of our long confinement; and while the prisoners were crowding on deck, we could occasionally discern among them the figures of some of our former messmates. We could not but compare their situation with our own; and sweet as was the taste to us of wholesome food, gladly would we have relinquished our repast, could we have sent it to them.

Our plentiful breakfast produced a great effect upon our spirits. We soon began to think and feel that we were, once more, *men*. Our anxiety for the arrival of Captain COREY from the shore was extreme. At length, about ten o'clock, he came on board and ordered the sloop to be got under way. No windlass nor capstan was necessary for that purpose, for we grasped the cable with our hands and run the anchor up to the bow in a moment. The sails were rapidly set; and, with the wind and tide in our favor, we soon lost sight of the *Jersey*, the Hospital-ships, and the dreaded sand-bank of the Wale bogt.

note), indicates, within a few days, the time when the *forty* British prisoners were carried from Rhode Island to New York for exchange: the extract from *The Pennsylvania Packet*, taken from a Providence paper of the twenty-seventh of July, indicates with equal certainty the exact date (*Sunday, July 21st*) when the *thirty-nine* American *naval* prisoners, who had been released from the Prison-ships at New York, reached that town,—the *fortieth*, poor BICKNELL, who had been left at Barrington (*post*, 118, 119), completed the number of those who had been exchanged.

The number and character of prisoners released, the State to which they belonged, the number of prisoners who reached Providence, and the explanation afforded by the *Recollections* for the difference of numbers,—the difficulty of effecting exchanges of *naval* prisoners also forming an important element in the evidence,—agree so entirely with the circumstances attending the release of the crew of the *Chance*, that there is no doubt that they refer to it.

We were obliged to pass near the shore of Blackwell's Island, where were several of our crew, who had been sent on shore among the sick. They had learned that the Cartel had arrived from Providence for the purpose of redeeming the crew of the *Chance*, and expected to be taken on board. Seeing us approaching, they had, in order to cause no delay, prepared for their departure, and stood together on the shore, with their bundles in their hands; but, to their unutterable disappointment and dismay, they saw us pass by. We knew them, and bitterly did we lament the necessity of leaving them behind. We could only wave our hands as we passed; but they could not return the salutation, and stood, as if petrified with horror, like statues, fixed immovably to the earth, until we had vanished from their sight.

I have since seen and conversed with one of these unfortunate men, who afterwards made his escape. He informed me that their removal from the *Jersey* to the Island was productive of the most beneficial effects upon their health, and that they had been exulting at the improvement of their condition; but their terrible disappointment overwhelmed them with despair. They then considered their fate inevitable, believing that in a few days they must be again conveyed on board the hulk, there to undergo all the agonies of another death.

We were hailed and examined by two Guard-ships near the Island, but were not long detained. When this was over, and all fear of further detention by our enemies had vanished, we gave way at once to our unrestrained feelings. We breathed a purer air; it was the air of Freedom. Every countenance was lighted up with smiles, and every heart swelled with expectation. Each hour presented some

new and pleasing object; some well-known spot, some peaceful dwelling, or some long-remembered spire.

Several of our crew were sick when we entered the Cartel, and the sudden change of air and diet caused some new cases of fever. This we attributed, in a great degree, to our having partaken too freely of fish and vegetables, a diet to which we had long been unaccustomed, and with which we were then abundantly supplied. No one, however, died on board the sloop.

One of our number, who was thus seized by the fever, was a young man named BICKNELL, of Barrington, Rhode Island. He was unwell when we left the *Jersey*, and his symptoms indicated the approaching fever; and when we entered Narragansett Bay, he was apparently dying. Being informed that we were in the Bay, he begged to be taken on deck, or at least to the hatchway, that he might look once more upon his native land. He said that he was sensible of his condition; that the hand of death was upon him; but that he was consoled by the thought that his remains would be decently interred, and he suffered to rest among those of his friends and kindred. I was astonished at the degree of resignation and composure with which he spoke. He pointed to his father's house, as we approached it, and said it contained all that was dear to him on earth. He requested to be put on shore. Our Captain was intimately acquainted with the family of the sufferer; and as the wind was light, we dropped our anchor, and complied with his request. He was placed in the boat, where I took a seat by his side, in order to support him; and, with two boys at the oars, we left the sloop. In a few minutes, his strength began rapidly to fail. He laid his fainting head upon my shoulder, and said he was going to

the shore, to be buried with his ancestors; that this had long been his ardent desire, and that God had heard his prayers. No sooner had we touched the shore, than one of the boys was sent to inform his family of the event. They hastened to the boat to receive their long-lost son and brother; but we could only give them his yet warm but lifeless corpse.¹

¹ The difference between the number of prisoners sent from New York, as described in *The Royal Gazette* (*ante*, 111, note), and that which arrived at Providence, as described in the extract from a Providence newspaper republished in *The Pennsylvania Packet* (*ante*, 111, note), affords indisputable evidence of the correctness of this portion of the *Recollections* of Captain DRING.

CHAPTER XXI.

OUR ARRIVAL HOME.

"There is a spot of earth supremely blest,
 "A dearer, sweeter spot than all the rest,
 "Where man, creation's tyrant, casts aside
 "His sword and sceptre, pageantry and pride.
 "Here woman reigns; the mother, daughter, wife,
 "Strew with fresh flowers the narrow way of life.
 "Where shall that *land*, that *spot of earth* be found?
 "Art thou a man?—a patriot?—look around:
 "Oh, thou shalt find, howe'er thy footsteps roam,
 "That land **THY COUNTRY**, and that spot **THY HOME!**"

MONTGOMERY.

AFTER remaining for a few minutes with the friends of our deceased comrade, we returned to the sloop, and proceeded up the river. It was about eight o'clock in the evening when we reached Providence. There were no quarantine regulations to detain us; but, as the yellow fever was raging among us, we took the precaution to anchor in the middle of the stream. It was a beautiful moonlight evening; and the intelligence of our arrival having spread through the town, the nearest wharf was in a short time crowded with people, drawn together by curiosity, and a desire for information relative to the fate of their friends and connections.

Continual inquiries were made from the anxious crowd

on the land respecting the condition of several different individuals on board. At length the information was given that some of our number were below, sick with the yellow fever. No sooner was this fact announced than the wharf was totally deserted; and, in a few minutes, not a human being remained in sight. "The *Old Jersey* Fever," as it was called, was well known throughout the whole country. All were acquainted with its terrible effects; and it was shunned as if its presence were certain destruction.

After the departure of the crowd, the sloop was brought alongside the wharf, and every one who could walk, immediately sprang on shore. So great was the dread of the pestilence, and so squalid and emaciated were the figures which we presented, that those among us whose families did not reside in Providence found it almost impossible to gain admittance into any dwelling. There being at that time no hospital in or near the town, and no preparations having been made for the reception of the sick, they were abandoned for that night. They were, however, supplied in a few hours with many small articles necessary for their immediate comfort, by the humane people in the vicinity of the wharf.

The friends of the sick who belonged in the vicinity of the town were immediately informed of our arrival; and in the course of the following day, these were removed from the vessel. For the remainder of the sufferers, ample provision was made, through the generous exertions of MESSRS. CLARK & NIGHTINGALE.

Solemn indeed are the reflections which crowd upon my mind, as I review the events which are here recorded. Forty-two years have passed away since this remnant of our ill-fated crew were thus liberated from their wasting

captivity. In that time, what changes have taken place! Of their whole number, but three are now alive. JAMES PITCHER, Doctor JOSEPH BOWEN, and myself, are the sole survivors. Of their officers, I alone remain.

CONCLUSION.

I CANNOT close these sketches without referring to the fate of the *Old Jersey*. At the expiration of the war, in 1783, the prisoners remaining on board were liberated; and the hulk, being considered unfit for further use, was abandoned where she lay. The dread of contagion prevented every one from venturing on board, and even from approaching her polluted frame. But the ministers of destruction were at work. Her planks were soon filled with worms, who, as if sent to remove this disgrace to the name of common humanity, ceased not from their labor until they had penetrated through her decaying bottom, through which the water rushed in, and she sunk. With her went down the names of many thousands of our countrymen, with which her inner planks and sheathing were literally covered; for but few of her inmates had ever neglected to add their own names to the almost innumerable catalogue. Could these be counted, some estimate might now be made of the whole number who were there immured; but this record has long since been consigned to eternal oblivion. It is supposed that more men perished on her decks than ever died in any other place of confinement on the face of the earth, in the same number of years.¹

¹ See extract from the Address of Hon. JONATHAN RUSSELL, delivered at Providence, July 4, 1800. (Appendix XI.)

Notwithstanding the lapse of time, and the consequent decay and dissolution of the remains of the multitudes who were buried on the shore, which were continually washed from the sand, and wasted by the elements, when, in the year 1803, the bank at the Wale bogt was removed, for the purpose of building a Navy Yard, a very great quantity of bones were collected. A memorial was presented to Congress, requesting an appropriation sufficient to defray the expenses necessary for their interment, and for the erection of a suitable Monument upon the spot; but the application was unsuccessful. In the year 1808 the bones were interred, under the direction of the Tammany Society of New York, attended by a solemn funeral procession, in the presence of a vast concourse of citizens;¹ and the corner-stone of a Monument was laid (to use the impressive words which were inscribed upon it), "*in the name of the Spirits of the Departed Free.*"²

¹ For an elaborate description of this procession, and the various ceremonies of the day, see *The Public Advertiser*, Vol. II., No. 436, New York, Friday, May 27, 1808, and the little volume issued by "The Wallabout Committee," in 1808.

² Mr. HENRY T. TUCKERMAN, some fifteen years ago, gravely informed his readers (*Life of SILAS TALBOT*, Edit. N. Y. 1850, page 92), that the remains of the victims of the *Old Jersey* had been "*decently interred, with a monument erected over them, near the site of their living sepulchre.*"

About five years after the publication of Mr. TUCKERMAN'S volume, with the information which has been quoted, an association was organized in the city of Brooklyn, entitled "THE MARTYRS' MONUMENT ASSOCIATION," having for its object the erection of "a suitable Monument to the Memory of those who died martyrs to the Revolution, in the British Prison-ships in the Wallabout Bay;" and many of the best-known residents of Brooklyn were among its officers and members, all of whom were evidently ignorant of the existence of any such monument as Mr. TUCKERMAN has described.

That Association issued an appeal, from the pen of its President, Honorable GEORGE TAYLOR, in which the assistance of the liberal was solicited; and from the carefully prepared pages (iii., iv.) of that well-known pamphlet, Mr.

TUCKERMAN may learn that, in 1855, "the truth had recently found notice, "that *there had been gathered beneath NO monumental pile*, the dust of those "hundreds upon hundreds of our fathers, who, by their heroic patriotism and "daring love of liberty, were impelled, in the great crisis in our country's "history, to serve in our then infant navy; and who, through British cruelty, "were sacrificed to the sacred cause of that Revolution, in Prison-ships in the "Wallabout Bay!" * * * * "UPON THE SHORES of the Wallabout," the Association continued, "in the sands of which lie whatever is unscattered of the remains "of those worthies, a movement has begun, designed to redeem the obligation, "with respect to them, *which neglect in the past* has entailed upon this genera- "tion."

If the reader will inquire of those who are best acquainted with the subject, he will learn that in 1865,—fifteen years after Mr. TUCKERMAN wrote the sentence which was first quoted,—the unscattered remains of the victims still continue undisturbed "in the sands, upon the shores of the Wallabout," where they have rested since the days of DAVID SPROAT and the *Old Jersey*; and that the first course of masonry has yet to be laid on the corner-stone, which, in April, 1868, was laid "in the name of the Spirits of the Departed "Free"—the corner-stone of that monument which, in 1850, Mr. TUCKERMAN, while mounted on his Pegasus, poetically described as already "erected."

APPENDIX.

BY THE EDITOR.

APPENDIX.

I.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NAVAL PRISONERS.

1. GENERAL WASHINGTON'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE OFFICER COMMANDING THE BRITISH FLEET AT NEW YORK, CONCERNING THE NAVAL PRISONERS.

1. GENERAL WASHINGTON TO ADMIRAL ARBUTHNOT.

Head-Quarters, 25 January, 1781.

SIR :

THROUGH a variety of channels, representations of too serious a nature to be disregarded have come to us, that the American naval prisoners in the harbor of New-York are suffering all the extremities of distress, from a too crowded and in all respects disagreeable and unwholesome situation, on board the Prison-ships, and from the want of food and other necessaries. The picture given us of their sufferings is truly calamitous and deplorable. If just, it is the obvious interest of both parties, omitting the plea of humanity, that the causes should be without delay inquired into and removed; if false, it is equally desirable, that effectual measures should be taken to obviate misapprehensions. This can only be done by permitting an officer, of confidence on both sides, to visit the prisoners in their respective confinements, and to examine into their true condition. This will either at once satisfy you that by some abuse of trust in the persons imme-

diately charged with the care of the prisoners, their treatment is really such as has been described to us and requires a change; or it will convince us that the clamors are ill-grounded. A disposition to aggravate the miseries of captivity is too illiberal to be imputed to any but those subordinate characters, who, in every service, are too often remiss or unprincipled. This reflection assures me that you will acquiesce in the mode proposed for ascertaining the truth and detecting delinquency on one side or falsehood on the other.

The discussions and asperities which have had too much place on the subject of prisoners are so irksome in themselves, and have had so many ill consequences, that it is infinitely to be wished that there may be no room given to revive them. The mode I have suggested appears to me calculated to bring the present case to a fair, direct, and satisfactory issue. I am not sensible of any inconveniences it can be attended with, and I therefore hope for your concurrence.

I shall be glad, as soon as possible, to hear from you on the subject.

I have the honor to be, &c.,

G. WASHINGTON.

2. ADMIRAL ARBUTHNOT'S REPLY.

Royal Oak, off New-York, 21 April, 1781.

SIR:

If I had not been very busy when I received your letter dated the 25th of January last, complaining of the treatment of the naval prisoners at this place, I certainly should have answered it before this time; and, notwithstanding I then thought, as I now do, that my own testimony would have been sufficient to put the truth past a doubt, I ordered the strictest scrutiny to be made into the conduct of all parties concerned in the victualling and treatment of those unfortunate people. Their several testimonies you must have seen, and I give you my honor that the transaction was conducted with such strict care and impartiality that you may rely on its validity.

Permit me now, Sir, to request that you will take the proper steps to cause Mr. BRADFORD, your Commissary, and the Jailer at Philadelphia, to abate that inhumanity which they exercise indiscriminately upon all people who are so unfortunate as to be carried into that place.

I will not trouble you, Sir, with a catalogue of grievances, further than to request that the unfortunate may feel as little of the severities of war as the circumstances of the time will permit, that in future they may not be fed in winter with salted clams, and that they may be afforded a sufficiency of fuel.

I am, Sir,

Your most obedient

and humble servant,

M. ARBUTHNOT.

2. PROCEEDINGS IN THE CONTINENTAL CONGRESS, CONCERNING THE NAVAL PRISONERS CONFINED IN NEW YORK AND ITS VICINITY.

FRIDAY, *August 3, 1781.*

* * * * *

The Committee, consisting of Mr. BODINOT, Mr. SHARPE, Mr. CLYMER, appointed to take into consideration the state of the American prisoners in the power of the enemy, report,

“That they have collected together and cursorily looked into various
“evidences of the treatment our unhappy fellow-citizens, prisoners
“with the enemy, have heretofore, and still do meet with, and find
“the subject of so important and serious a nature as to demand much
“greater attention, and fuller consideration, than the present distressed situation of those confined on board the Prison-ships at
“New York will now admit of;” wherefore they beg leave to make a partial report, and desire leave to sit again.

They accordingly submitted a report; whereupon,

“*Resolved*, That it appears to Congress that a very large number of
“marine prisoners and citizens of these United States taken by the
“enemy, are now close confined on board Prison-ships in the harbor
“of New York:

“That the said Prison-ships are so unequal in size to the number of
“prisoners, as not to admit of a possibility of preserving life in this
“warm season of the year, they being crowded together in such a

“manner as to be in danger of suffocation, as well as exposed to every
“kind of putrid and pestilential disorder :

“That no circumstances of the enemy’s particular situation can
“justify this outrage on humanity, it being contrary to the usage and
“custom of civilized nations, thus deliberately to murder their cap-
“tives in cold blood, as the enemy will not assert that Prison-ships,
“equal to the number of prisoners, cannot be obtained so as to afford
“room sufficient for the necessary purposes of life :

“That the enemy do daily improve these distresses to enlist and
“compel many of our citizens to enter on board their ships of war,
“and thus to fight against their fellow-citizens and dearest con-
“nections :

“That the said marine prisoners, until they can be exchanged,
“should be supplied with such necessaries of clothing and provisions
“as can be obtained to mitigate their present sufferings :

“That, therefore, the Commander-in-chief be, and he is hereby,
“instructed to remonstrate to the proper officer within the enemy’s
“lines, on the said unjustifiable treatment of our marine prisoners,
“and demand, in the most express terms, to know the reasons of this
“unnecessary severity towards them ; and that the Commander-in-
“chief transmit such answer as may be received thereon, to Congress,
“that decided measures for due retaliation may be adopted, if a redress
“of these evils is not immediately given :

“That the Commander-in-chief be, and he is hereby, also instructed
“to direct the supplying the said prisoners with such provisions and
“light clothing, for their present more comfortable subsistence, as
“may be in his power to obtain, and in such manner as he may judge
“most advantageous for these United States.

“*Ordered*, That the Committee have leave to sit again.”

3. GENERAL WASHINGTON'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE
OFFICER COMMANDING AT NEW YORK, AGREEABLY TO THE
FOREGOING INSTRUCTIONS BY THE CONGRESS.

1. GENERAL WASHINGTON TO COMMODORE AFFLECK.

Head-Quarters, 21 August, 1781.

SIR :

The almost daily complaints of the severities exercised towards the American marine prisoners in New York, have induced the Honorable the Congress of the United States to direct me to remonstrate to the commanding officer of his Britannic Majesty's ships of war in that harbor upon the subject, and to report to them his answer. The principal complaint now is, the inadequacy of the room in the Prison-ships to the number of prisoners confined on board of them, which causes the death of many, and is the occasion of most intolerable inconveniences and distresses to those who survive. This line of conduct is the more aggravating, as the want of a greater number of Prison-ships, or of sufficient room on shore, cannot be pleaded in excuse.

As a bare denial of what has been asserted by so many individuals, who have unfortunately experienced the miseries I have mentioned, will not be satisfactory, I have to propose that our Commissary-general of prisoners, or any other officer, who shall be agreed upon, shall have liberty to visit the ships, inspect the situation of the prisoners, and make a report, from an exact survey of the situation in which they may be found, whether, in his opinion, there has been any just cause of complaint.

I shall be glad to be favored with an answer as soon as convenient.

I have the honor to be

Your most obedient servant,

G. WASHINGTON.

2. CAPTAIN AFFLECK'S REPLY.

New York, 30 August, 1781.

SIR :

I intend not either to deny or to assert, for it will neither facilitate business nor alleviate distress. The subject of your letter seems to turn upon two points, namely the inconveniences and distresses, which

the American prisoners suffer from the inadequacy of room in the Prison-ships, which occasions the death of many of them, as you are told; and that a Commissary-general of prisoners from you shall have liberty to visit the ships, inspect the situation of the prisoners, and make a report from an actual survey.

I take leave to assure you, that I feel for the distresses of mankind as much as any man; and, since my coming to the naval command in this department, one of my principal endeavors has been to regulate the Prison and Hospital-ships.

The Government having made no other provision for naval prisoners than shipping, it is impossible that the greater inconvenience, which people confined on board ships experience beyond those confined on shore, can be avoided, and a sudden accumulation of people often aggravates the evil. But I assure you, that every attention is shown that is possible, and that the Prison-ships are under the very same regulations here, that have been constantly observed towards the prisoners of all nations in Europe. Tables of diet are publicly affixed, officers visit every week, redress and report grievances, and the numbers are thinned as they can provide shipping, and no attention has been wanting.

The latter point cannot be admitted in its full extent; but if you think fit to send an officer of character to the lines for that purpose, he will be conducted to me, and he shall be accompanied by an officer, and become a witness of the manner in which we treat the prisoners. And I shall expect to have my officer visit the prisoners detained in your jails and dungeons in like manner, as well as in the mines, where I am informed many an unhappy victim languishes out his days.

I must remark, had Congress ever been inclined, they might have contributed to relieve the distresses of those we are under the necessity of holding as prisoners, by sending in all in their possession towards the payment of the large debt they owe us on that head, which might have been an inducement towards liberating many now in captivity.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

With due respect, &c.,

EDM. AFFLECK.

4. EXTRACT OF A LETTER FROM GENERAL WASHINGTON TO
THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS.

Philadelphia, 27 December, 1781.

SIR :

* * * * *

I have taken the liberty of enclosing the copies of two letters from the Commissary-general of prisoners, setting forth the debt, which is due from us on account of naval prisoners, the number remaining in captivity, their miserable situation, and the little probability there is of procuring their release for the want of proper subjects in our hands.

Before we proceed to an inquiry into the measures, which ought to be adopted to enable us to pay our debt, and to effect the exchange of those, who still remain in captivity, a matter which it may take some time to determine, humanity and policy point out the necessity of administering to the pressing wants of a number of the most valuable subjects of the republic.

Had they been taken in the Continental service, I should have thought myself authorized, in conjunction with the Minister of War, to apply a remedy; but as the greater part of them were not thus taken, as appears by Mr. SKINNER's representation, I must await the decision of Congress upon the subject.

Had a system, some time ago planned by Congress and recommended to the several States, been adopted and carried fully into execution, I mean that of obliging all Captains of private vessels to deliver over their prisoners to the Continental Commissioners upon certain conditions, I am persuaded that the numbers taken and brought into the many ports of the United States would have amounted to a sufficiency to have exchanged those taken from us; but instead of that, it is to be feared, that few in proportion are secured, and that the few, who are sent in, are so partially applied, that it creates great disgust in those remaining. The consequence of which is, that conceiving themselves neglected, and seeing no prospect of relief, many of them enter into the enemy's service, to the very great loss of our trading interest. Congress will, therefore, I hope, see the necessity of renewing their former, or making some similar, recommendation to the States.

In addition to the motives above mentioned, for wishing that the

whole business of prisoners of war might be brought under one general regulation, there is another of no small consideration, which is, that it would probably put a stop to those mutual complaints of ill treatment which are frequently urged on each part. For it is a fact, that, for above two years, we have had no reason to complain of the treatment of the Continental land prisoners in New York, neither have we been charged with any improper conduct towards those in our hands. I consider the sufferings of the seamen for some time past, as arising in a great measure from the want of that general regulation, which has been spoken of, and without which there will constantly be a great number remaining in the hands of the enemy.

I have the honor to be,

Your most obedient servant,

G. WASHINGTON.

5. GENERAL WASHINGTON TO THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS.

Philadelphia, 18 February, 1782.

SIR :

I do myself the honor to enclose copies of the reports of the Commissary-general of prisoners, who has just returned from New York, with copies of the papers to which he refers. Your Excellency will perceive thereby, that the restriction upon the exchange of Lieutenant-general Earl CORNWALLIS operates against the liberation of Brigadier-general Scott, seven Colonels and two Lieutenant-colonels, who upon the principles of the tariff established between us and the enemy, are equivalent to his Lordship in value.

I also enclose the copy of a letter from Sir HENRY CLINTON, by which it would appear that the exchange of Mr. LAURENS might be effected for Earl CORNWALLIS, should Congress think proper to accede to the proposal. I beg leave to remark upon that letter, that there has been some misconception either on the part of Colonel LAURENS or Lord CORNWALLIS, as to what passed on the subject in Virginia. Colonel LAURENS asked me there, whether, supposing an exchange could be effected between his father and his Lordship, I should have

any objection to it. I answered, none personally, and that, as Congress had made no difficulty in offering General BURGOYNE for Mr. LAURENS, I thought they might now probably offer Lord CORNWALLIS, but that the matter did not depend upon me. This I find has been construed into absolute consent on my part.

With respect to the policy of prohibiting the exchange of Lord CORNWALLIS I will not pretend to determine. I cannot, however, help observing, that it operates disagreeably in giving uneasiness to those officers of ours, who can only be exchanged by composition, and who are by the enemy set against him, and that it may be considered as a departure from the spirit of the terms of the capitulation of York.

Mr. SPROAT's proposition of the exchange of British soldiers for American seamen, if acceded to, will immediately give the enemy a very considerable reinforcement, and will be a constant draft hereafter upon the prisoners of war in our hands. It ought also to be considered, that few or none of the naval prisoners in New York and elsewhere belong to the Continental service. I however feel for the situation of these unfortunate people, and wish to see them relieved by any mode, which will not materially affect the public good. In some former letters upon this subject I have mentioned a plan, by which I am certain they might be liberated nearly as fast as captured. It is by obliging the Captains of all armed vessels, both public and private, to throw their prisoners into common stock under the direction of the Commissary-general of prisoners. By these means they would be taken care of, and regularly applied to the exchange of those in the hands of the enemy. Now the greater part are dissipated, and the few that remain are applied partially. I shall be obliged to your Excellency for obtaining and transmitting to me the sentiments of Congress upon these subjects as early as convenient.

I have the honor to be,

Your most obedient servant,

G. WASHINGTON.

6. LETTER FROM A COMMITTEE OF THE PRISONERS ON BOARD
THE *JERSEY*, TO JAMES RIVINGTON, WITH THE ENCLO-
SURES.

[From *The Royal Gazette*, No. 595, New York, Wednesday, June 12, 1782.]

On board the prison ship Jersey, June 11, 1782.

SIR,

ENCLOSED are five letters, which if you will give a place in your news-paper, will greatly oblige a number of poor prisoners who seem to be deserted by our own countrymen, who has it in their power and will not exchange us.

In behalf of the whole, we beg leave to subscribe ourselves,

Sir,

Your much obliged Servants,

JOHN COOPER,

JOHN SHEFFIELD,

WM. CHAD,

RICH. ECCLESTON,

JOHN BAAS.

Signed in behalf of the whole

To Mr. JAMES RIVINGTON, Printer.

[INCLOSURES.]

1. DAVID SPROAT, COMMISSARY OF PRISONERS, TO THE PRISONERS ON
BOARD THE *JERSEY*.

New-York, 11th June, 1782.

THIS will be handed you by Captain DANIEL ABORN, and Doctor JOSEPH BOWEN, who, agreeable to your Petition to his Excellency Rear-Admiral DIGBY, have been permitted to go out, and are now returned from General WASHINGTON's Head-Quarters, where they delivered your petition to him, represented your disagreeable situation at this extreme hot season of the year, and in your names solicited his Excellency to grant you speedy relief, by exchanging you for a part of the British soldiers, prisoners in his hands, the only possible means in his power to effect it.

Mr. ABORN and the Doctor waits on you with his answer, which I am sorry to say is a flat denial.

Inclosed I send you copies of three letters which have passed between Mr. SKINNER and me, on the occasion, which will convince you that every thing has been done on the part of Admiral DIGBY, to bring about a fair and general exchange of prisoners on both sides.

I am, Your most humble Servant,

DAVID SPROAT,

Commissary-General for

Naval Prisoners.

To the Prisoners on board his
Majesty's prison-ship *Jersey*.

2. DAVID SPROAT, BRITISH COMMISSARY, TO ABRAHAM SKINNER, AMERICAN COMMISSARY OF PRISONERS.

New-York, 1st June, 1782.

SIR

WHEN I last saw you at Elizabeth-Town, I mentioned the bad consequence, which in all probability would take place in the hot weather, if an exchange of prisoners was not agreed to by the commissioners on the part of General WASHINGTON.

His Excellency Rear-Admiral DIGBY has ordered me to inform you, that the very great increase of prisoners and heat of the weather now baffles all our care and attention to keep them healthy: Five ships have been taken up for their reception, to prevent being crowded, and a great number permitted to go on parole.

In Winter, and during the cold weather, they lived comfortably, being fully supplied with warm cloathing, blankets, &c. purchased with the money which I collected from the charitable people of this city; but now the weather requires a fresh supply—something light and suitable to the season—for which you will be pleased to make the necessary provision; as it is impossible for them to be healthy in the rags they now wear, without a single shift of cloathing to keep themselves clean. Humanity, sympathy, my duty and orders obliges me to trouble you again on this disagreeable subject, to request you will lose no time in laying this their situation before his Excellency Gen-

eral WASHINGTON, who, I hope, will listen to the cries of a distressed people, and grant them (as well as the British prisoners in his hands) relief, by consenting to a general and immediate exchange.

I am, Sir,

Your most obedient Servant,

DAVID SPROAT,
Commissary-General for
Naval Prisoners.

ABRAHAM SKINNER, Esq;
Commissary-General for Prisoners.

3. COMMISSARY SKINNER'S ANSWER.

New-York, June 9th, 1782.

SIR,

FROM the present situation of the American naval prisoners on board your prison ships, I am induced to propose to you the exchange of as many of them as I can give you British naval prisoners for; leaving the balance already due to you to be paid when in our power. I could wish this to be represented to his Excellency Rear Admiral DIGBY, and that the proposal could be acceded to, as it would relieve many of those distress men and be consistent with the humane purposes of our office.

I will admit that we are unable at present, to give you seaman for seaman and thereby relieve the prison ships of their dreadful burthen; but it ought to be remembered that there is a large balance of British soldiers¹ due to the United States, since February last, and that as we have it in our power, we may be disposed to place the British soldiers who are now in our possession in as disagreeable a situation as those men are on board the prison ships.

I am, Sir, your most obedient humble servant,

ABM. SKINNER

Com. Gen. for Prisoners.

DAVID SPROAT, Esq;
Com. Gen. for Naval
Prisoners, New-York.

¹ About 250 men who Mr. SPROAT offered to discount if a general exchange took place.—*Ed. of The Royal Gazette.*

4. COMMISSARY SPROAT'S REPLY.

New-York, June 9, 1782.

SIR,

I HAVE received your letter of this date, and laid it before his Excellency Rear Admiral DIGBY, commander in chief, &c. &c. &c. who has directed me to give for answer, that the balance of prisoners,¹ owing to the British having proceeded from lenity and humanity, on the part of himself and those who commanded before his arrival, is surprized you have not been induced to offer to exchange them first; and until this is done cannot consent to your proposal of a partial exchange, leaving the remainder, as well as the British prisoners in your hands to linger in confinement.

Conscious of the American prisoners under my direction, being in every respect taken as good care of as their situation and ours will admit; you must not believe that Admiral DIGBY will depart from the justice of this measure, because you have it in your power to make the British Soldiers who are prisoners with you, more miserable than there is any necessity for.

I am, Sir,

Your humble Servant.

DAVID SPROAT,
Commissary-General for
Naval Prisoners.

ABRAHAM SKINNER, Esq; American
Commissary-General for Prisoners,
at present in New-York.

¹ Upwards of 1,300 Naval Prisoners have been sent more than we have received.—*Ed. of The Royal Gazette.*

5. ADDRESS TO THEIR COUNTRYMEN BY THE COMMITTEE OF AMERICAN
NAVAL PRISONERS ON BOARD THE *JERSEY*.¹

On board the Prison Ship Jersey,
New York, June 11. [1782.]

FRIENDS AND FELLOW COUNTRYMEN OF AMERICA.

YOU may bid a final adieu to all your friends and relations who are now on board the *Jersey* prison ship at New-York, unless you rouse the government to comply with just and honourable proposals, which has already been done on the part of Britons, but alas! it is with pain we inform you, that our petition to his Excellency General WASHINGTON, offering our services to the country during the present campaign, if he would send soldiers in exchange for us, is frankly denied.

What is to be done? are we to lie here and share the fate of our unhappy brothers who are dying daily? *No*, unless you relieve us immediately, we shall be under the necessity of leaving our country, in preservation of our lives.

Signed in behalf of prisoners,

{ JOHN COOPER,
JOHN SHEFFIELD,
WILLIAM CHAD,
RICHARD ECCLESTON,
GEORGE WANTON,
JOHN BAAS.

Mr. JAMES RIVINGTON, Printer, New York.

¹ This Address was reproduced in (HUGH GAINES'S) *The New-York Gazette: and the Weekly Mercury*, No. 1,600, New York, Monday, June 17, 1782.

7. LETTER FROM A COMMITTEE OF CAPTAINS, NAVAL PRISONERS OF WAR, TO JAMES RIVINGTON; WITH A REPORT OF A SUB-COMMITTEE ON THE CONDITION OF THE PRISONERS ON BOARD THE *JERSEY*.

[From *The Royal Gazette*, No. 599, New York, Wednesday, June 26, 1782.]

New-York, 22d June, 1782.

SIR,

WE beg you will be pleased to give the inclosed *Report* and *Resolve* of a number of Masters of American vessels, a place in your next News-paper, for the information of the public. In order to undeceive numbers of our countrymen without the British lines, who have not an opportunity of seeing the state and situation of the prisoners in New-York, as we have done,

We are, Sir,

Your most obedient humble servants,

ROBERT HARRIS,¹

JOHN CHACE,

CHARLES COLLINS,²

PHILEMON HASKELL,

JONATHAN CARNES.

To MR. RIVINGTON.

[REPORT.]

WE, whose names are hereunto subscribed, late Masters of American vessels, which have been captured by the British cruizers and brought into this port, having obtained the enlargement of our paroles from his Excellency Rear Admiral DIGBY, to return to our respective homes, being anxious before our departure to know the true state and situation of the prisoners confined on board the prison ships and prison hospital ships, have requested and appointed six of our number, viz: ROBERT HARRIS, CHARLES COLLINS, JOHN CHACE, PHILEMON HAS-

¹ Captain of the sloop *Industry*.

² Captain of the *Swordfish*, of Warren, R. I. which was taken into New York with the *chance*. (*Ante*, 24.)

KELL, JONATHAN CARNES, and CHRISTOPHER SMITH, to go on board the said prison ships and prison hospital ships for that purpose, and the said ROBERT HARRIS, CHARLES COLLINS, JOHN CHACE, PHILEMON HASKELL, JONATHAN CARNES, and CHRISTOPHER SMITH, having gone on board five of those vessels, attended by Mr. DAVID SPROAT, Commissary General for Naval Prisoners, and Mr. GEORGE RUTHERFORD, Surgeon to the prison hospital ships; do report to us that they have found them in as comfortable a situation as it is possible for prisoners to be on board of ships at this season of the year, and much more so than they had any idea of, and that any thing said to the contrary, is false and without foundation: That they inspected their beef, pork, flour, bread, oatmeal, pease, butter, liquors, and indeed every other species of provisions which is issued on board his Britannic Majesty's ships of war, and found them all good of their kind, which survey being made before the prisoners, they acknowledged the same and declared that they had no complaint to make but the want of *cloaths and a speedy exchange*: We, therefore, from this Report, and what we have all seen and known, DO DECLARE, that great commendation is due to his Excellency, Rear-Admiral DIGBY, for his humane disposition and indulgence to his prisoners, and also to those he entrusts the care of them to; viz. the Captain and officers of his Majesty's prison ship *Jersey*, for their attention in preserving good order, having the ship kept clean and awnings spread over *the whole of* her, 'fore and 'aft: To Doctor RUTHERFORD and the Gentlemen acting under him as Mates, for their constant care and attendance on the sick, whom we found in wholesome clean ships; also, covered with awnings, 'fore and 'aft, every man furnished with a cradle, bed and sheets, made of good Russia linen, to lay in; the best of fresh provisions, vegetables, wine, rice, barley, &c. which was served out to them. And we further do declare, in justice to Mr. SPROAT, and the gentlemen acting under him in his department, that they conscientiously do their duty with great humanity and indulgence to the prisoners, and reputation to themselves: And we unanimously do agree, that nothing is wanting to preserve the lives and health of those unfortunate prisoners but clean cloaths, and a speedy exchange, which testimony we freely give without constraint, and covenant each with the other, to endeavour to effect their exchange as soon as possible: For the remembrance of

this our engagement, we have furnished ourselves with copies of this instrument of writing.

Given under our hands at New York, the twenty-second day of June, 1782.

Captains.

{ ROBERT HARRIS,
CHARLES COLLINS,
JOHN CHACE,
PHILEMON HASKELL,
JOHN CARNES,
CHRISTOPHER SMITH,
JAMES GASTON,
JOHN TANNER,
DANIEL ABORN,¹
RICHARD MUMFORD,
ROBERT CLIFTON,
JOHN M. KEVER,
J. BOWEN, Doctor.²

8. LETTER FROM DAVID SPROAT, BRITISH COMMISSARY OF PRISONERS, TO JAMES RIVINGTON, WITH ENCLOSURES.

[From *The Royal Gazette*, No. 601, New-York, Wednesday, July 3, 1782.]

New-York, July 2, 1782.

SIR,

INCLOSED I send you a letter from ABRAHAM SKINNER, Esq; for publication, which you will observe is by his own request; therefore be pleased to give it a place in your newspaper tomorrow, as well as the other two letters herewith inclosed the one from his Excellency General WASHINGTON, to his Excellency Rear Admiral DIGBY, and the other the Admiral's answer to him, which I have been allowed also to publish, to shew the public, that the evils brought on the prisoners proceed from want of being regularly exchanged.

I am, Sir, your most obedient servant,

DAVID SPROAT,

Commissary General for
Naval Prisoners.

MR. JAMES RIVINGTON,
Printer, New-York.

¹ Late Captain of the *Chance*.

² Late Surgeon of the *Chance*.

[INCLOSURES.]

1. GENERAL WASHINGTON TO REAR-ADMIRAL DIGBY.

Head-Quarters, June 5th, 1782.

SIR,

BY a parole, granted to two gentlemen, Messrs. ABORN and BOWEN, I perceive that your Excellency has granted them permission to come to me with a representation of the sufferings of the American naval-prisoners at New-York.

As I have no agency on naval matters, this application to me is made on mistaken grounds—But curiosity leading me to enquire into the nature and cause of their sufferings, I am informed that the principal complaint is, that of their being crowded, especially at this season, in great numbers on board of foul and infectious prison ships, where disease and death are almost inevitable. This circumstance I am persuaded needs only to be mentioned to your Excellency to obtain that redress which is in your power *only* to afford, and which humanity so strongly prompts.

If the fortune of war, Sir, has thrown a number of these miserable people into your hands, I am certain your Excellency's feelings for fellow men, must induce you to proportion the ships (if they must be confined on board ships) to their accommodation and comfort, and not by crowding them together in a few, bring on disorders which consign them by half dozens in a day to the grave.

The soldiers of his Britannic Majesty, prisoners with us, were they (which might be the case) to be equally crowded together in close and confined prisons, at this season, would be exposed to equal loss and misery.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your Excellency's most obedient

Humble Servant,

GEO. WASHINGTON.

His Excellency Rear-Admiral DIGBY.

2. REAR-ADMIRAL DIGBY'S ANSWER.

New-York, June 8, 1782.

SIR,

MY feelings prompted me to grant Messrs. ABORN and BOWEN permission to wait on your Excellency to represent their miserable situation. And if your Excellency's feelings on this occasion are like mine, you will not hesitate one moment relieving both the British and Americans suffering under confinement.

I have the Honour to be,

Your Excellency's,

Very obedient Servant,

R. DIGBY.

His Excellency General WASHINGTON.

3. COMMISSARY ABRAHAM SKINNER TO COMMISSARY DAVID SPROAT.

Camp, Highlands, June 24th, 1782.

SIR,

AS I perceive by a New-York paper of the 12th instant, the last letters which passed between us on the subject of naval prisoners have been committed to print, I must request the same be done with this, which is intended to contain some animadversions on those publications.

The principles and policy which appear to actuate your superiors in their conduct towards the American seamen, who unfortunately fall into their power, are too apparent to admit of a doubt or misapprehension. I am sorry to observe Sir, that notwithstanding the affectation of candour and fairness on your part, from the universal tenor of behaviour on your side of the lines; it is obvious, that the designs of the British is, by misrepresenting the state of facts with regard to exchanges, to excite jealousy in the minds of our unfortunate seamen, that they are neglected by their countrymen, and by attempting to make them believe, that all the miseries they are now suffering in consequence of a pestilential sickness, arise from want of inclination in

General WASHINGTON to exchange them when he has it in his power to do it; in hopes of being able by this insinuation, and by the unrelenting severity you make use of in confining them in the contaminated holds of prison ships, to compel them, in order to avoid the dreadful alternative of almost inevitable death, to enter the service of the King of Great-Britain.

To shew that these observations are just and well grounded, I think it necessary to inform you of some facts which have happened within my immediate notice, and to put you in mind of others which you cannot deny. I was myself present at the time when Captain ABORN and Doctor BOWEN, (who were permitted by Admiral DIGBY to come out and represent their situation, and solicit the exchange of naval for land prisoners,) waited on his Excellency General WASHINGTON, and know perfectly well the answer his Excellency gave to that application;—he informed them in the first place, that he was not directly or indirectly invested with any power or interference respecting the exchange of naval prisoners; that this business was formerly under the direction of the Board of Admiralty, that upon the annihilation of that Board, Congress had committed it to the Financier (who had in charge all our naval prisoners) and he to the Secretary at War; that he (the General) was notwithstanding disposed to do every thing in his power for their assistance and relief; that as exchanging seamen for soldiers was contrary to the original agreement for the exchange of prisoners, which specified that officers should be exchanged for officers, soldiers for soldiers, citizens for citizens, and seamen for seamen; as it was contrary to the custom and practice of other nations, and as it would be, in his opinion, contrary to the soundest policy, by giving the enemy a great and permanent strength, for which we could receive no compensation, or at best, but a partial and temporary one, he did not think it would be admissible; but as it appeared to him, from a variety of well authenticated information, the present misery and mortality which prevailed among the naval prisoners, were almost entirely, if not altogether, produced by the *mode of their confinement*, being closely crowded together in infectious prison-ships, where the very air is pregnant with disease, and the ships themselves (never having been cleaned in the course of many years) a mere mass of putrefaction; he would

therefore, from motives of humanity, write to Rear-Admiral DIGBY, in whose power it was to remedy this great evil, by confining them on shore, or having a sufficient number of prison-ships provided for the purpose; for he observed, it was as preposterously cruel to confine 800 men, at this sultry season, on board the Jersey prison-ship, as it would be to shut up the whole army of Lord CORNWALLIS to perish in the New Gaol of Philadelphia; but if more commodious and healthy accommodations were not afforded, we had the means of retaliation in our hands, which he should not hesitate in that case, to make use of, by confining the land prisoners with as much severity as our seamen were held.—The Gentlemen of the Committee appeared to be sensible of the force of those reasons, however repugnant they might be to the feelings and wishes of the men who had destruction and death staring them in the face.

His Excellency was further pleased to suffer me to go to New York to examine into the ground of the suffering of the prisoners, and to devise, if possible, some way or another, for their liberation or relief: With this permission I went to your lines; and in consequence of the authority I had been previously invested with, from the Secretary at War, I made the proposal contained in my letter to you of the 9th inst. Although I could not claim this as a matter of right, I flatter'd myself it would have been granted from the principles of humanity as well as other motives. There had been a balance of 495 land prisoners due to us ever since the month of February last, when a settlement was made; besides which, to the best of my belief, 400 have been sent in (this is the true state of the fact, though it differs widely from the account of 250 men, which is falsely stated in the note annexed to my letter in the New-York paper): notwithstanding this balance, I was then about sending into your lines a number of land prisoners, as an equivalent for ours, who were then confined in the Sugar-House, without which (though the debt was acknowledged) I could not make interest to have them liberated; this business has since been actually negociated, and we glory in having our conduct, such as will bear the strictest scrutiny, and be found consonant to the dictates of reason, liberality and justice. But, Sir, since you would not agree to the proposals I made, since I was refused being permitted to visit the prison-

ships (for which I conceive no other reason can be produced than your being ashamed or afraid of having those graves of our seamen seen by one who dared to represent the horrors of them to his countrymen). Since the commissioners from your side, at their late meeting, would not enter into an adjustment of the accounts for supplying your naval and land prisoners, on which there are large sums due to us; and since your superiors will neither make provision for the support of your prisoners in our hands, nor accommodation for the mere existence of ours, who are now languishing in your prison-ships, it becomes my duty, Sir, to state these pointed facts to you, that the imputations may recoil where they are deserved, and to report to those, under whose authority I have the honor to act, that such measures as they deem proper may be adopted.

And now, Sir, I will conclude this long letter, with observing that not having a sufficiency of British seamen in our possession, we are not able to release ours by exchange; this is our misfortune, but it is not a crime, and ought not to operate as a mortal punishment against the unfortunate—we ask no favour; we claim nothing but common justice and humanity, while we assert to the whole world, as a notorious fact, that the unprecedented inhumanity in the *mode* of confining our naval prisoners, to the amount of 800, in one old hulk, which has been made use of as a prison-ship for more than years, without ever having been once purified, has been the real and sole cause of the death of hundreds of brave Americans who would not have perished in that untimely and barbarous manner, had they (when prisoners) been suffered to breathe a purer air, and to enjoy more liberal and convenient accommodations, agreeably to the practice of civilized nations, when at war, the example which has always been set you by the Americans: You may say, and I shall admit, that if they were placed on islands and more liberty given them, that some might desert; but is not this the case with your prisoners in our hands? And could we not avoid this also if we were to adopt the same rigid and inhuman mode of confinement you do?

I beg, Sir, you will be pleased to consider this as addressed to you officially, as the principal executive officer in the department of naval-prisoners, and not personally; and that you will attribute any

uncommon warmth of style, which I may have been led into, to my feeling and animation, on a subject, with which I find myself so much interested, both from the principles of humanity and the duties of office.

I am, SIR,

Your most obedient Servant,

ABRAM SKINNER,

Commissary-General for

Prisoners.

DAVID SPROAT, Esq.

4. COMMISSARY SPROAT'S ANSWER.

New-York, June 30, 1782.

SIR,

I RECEIVED your letter, dated Highlands, the 24th instant, and in compliance with your request, will send it to the Press for publication.

The animadversions you have been pleased to make in the last letters which passed between us on the subject of exchange of prisoners, are exceedingly indelicate; many of them not founded on matters of fact, and therefore will not answer the purpose for which they seem calculated, *viz.* to shut the mouths of your injured countrymen from complaining against those in power amongst you.

Whether his Excellency General WASHINGTON Commander-in-Chief has agency on naval matters, or whether the exchange of prisoners comes under the immediate direction of the Financier or Secretary at War, is but small consolation for the poor captive to know, after the effects resulting from long confinement has brought on his ruin. In this manner, according to custom, it appears you are attempting to vindicate the character of those under whose authority you say you have the honor to act, by endeavouring to throw the blame off yourselves on my superiors here, as being the cause of the prisoners suffering in confinement; such doctrine from your side the lines brings nothing new. It is become quite common for your public writers, when Americans strike the blow, to attempt to cast the odium on the

British, and trumpet the injury as received, when in fact themselves are the aggressors.

The present case is exactly in point.—In the beginning of April last, when the Commissioners met at Elizabeth Town, his Excellency Rear-Admiral DIGBY empowered those on the part of the British, to offer in exchange the American seamen for British soldiers *man for man*, because you had not a sufficient number of British seamen, or the least prospect of collecting as many, to give in exchange for your own who were then in confinement here; and because he foresaw the impossibility of keeping them healthy when the hot season of the year would come on; but *this generous proposal* was rejected by the Commissioners on the part of General Washington, in consequence of which many prisoners on both sides, have fell victims to your cruelty, in not suffering their exchanges to take place: And it is evident to the world, however you may gloss the matter, that the deaths of many may be altogether attributed to this cause. Read the declaration hereunto subjoined, of a number of old experienced Masters of American vessels;¹ surely no one will be so hardy as contradict what they have said in the matter; which is, that the best care possible is taken of them, and that nothing is wanted to relieve them, but *the want of Cloaths and a speedy Exchange*; which is clearly proved lays solely with Gen. WASHINGTON to comply with or some other person in power amongst you.

Your not having a sufficiency of British seamen to exchange yours who are prisoners here, I never did allege was a “crime,” but give me leave Sir, to say, that I think it shews a very great want of humanity and certainly is a CRIME in you, not to make use of the British soldiers in your hands in exchange for your own seamen; however policy may dictate, every good man must shudder at the thought of devoting such a number of your fellow creatures to drag out life in confinement; it is really a wonder that they do not all enter into our service rather than submit to such treatment.

You may say that you was refused leave to go on board the prison ships—This I deny, on the contrary, Sir, when it was proposed, you

¹ The “Report and Resolves” of the Masters of American vessels, published in *The Royal Gazette*, on Wednesday, the twenty-sixth of June, 1782 (*ante*, p. 143), were appended to this letter.—H. E. D.

declined it—and I cannot help taking notice of your claiming the merit of shewing us the example of treating the prisoners well. Do but call to mind the numbers of British sailors and soldiers who have been coop'd up in the goals, at Philadelphia at this season of the year, crowded as much as ever the prison ships here, and fed on a scanty allowance of dried stinking clams, and bread and water only,—in order to compel them to enter on board your privateers: Of the example set at Boston, and in other ports, where your ships of war have been, in pressing the British subjects, who were prisoners at the time, on board of them, against their will, and this as often as they had occasion for their service. But our mission admits not of controversy, therefore I shall rest the merit of this cause on the following declaration of your own people.

I am, SIR,

Your most obedient humble Servant,

DAVID SPROAT,
Commissary-General for
Naval-Prisoners.

P. S. The note respecting the balance of prisoners due you by Mr. LORING, which you have been disposed to call false, was taken from himself, who has since made a more particular inspection of the accounts as they stood at that time, and finds the balance to be no more than 245.

ABRAM SKINNER, Esq., Commissary-
General, at Camp, Highlands,
or elsewhere.

9. ANSWER TO THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF OFFICERS
ON THE CONDITION OF THE PRISONERS ON BOARD OF THE
OLD JERSEY.

[From *The Independent Chronicle*, August. 1782.]

MR. PRINTER:

Happening to be at Mr. Bracket's tavern last Saturday, and hearing two gentlemen conversing on the surprising alteration in regard to the treatment our prisoners met with in New-York, and as I have had

the misfortune to be more than once a prisoner in England, and in different prison ships in New-York, and having suffered every thing but death, I cannot help giving all attention to any thing I hear or read relating to the treatment our brave seamen met with on board the prison ships in New-York. One of the gentlemen observed, that the treatment to our prisoners must certainly be much better, as so many of our commanders had signed a paper that was wrote by Mr. David Sproat, the commissary of naval prisoners in New-York. The other gentleman answered, and told him he could satisfy him in regard to that matter, having seen and conversed with several of the captains that signed Mr. Sproat's paper, who told him that although they had put their hands to the paper, that Mr. Sproat sent them on Long Island, where they were upon parole, yet it was upon these conditions they did it, in order to have leave to go home to their wives and families, and not be sent on board the prison ship, as Mr. Sproat had threatened to do if they refused to sign the paper that he sent them. These captains further said, that they did not read the paper nor hear it read. The gentleman then asked them, how they could sign their names to a paper they did not read; they said it was because they might go home upon parole. He asked one of them why he did not contradict it since it had appeared in the public papers, and was false; he said he dare not at present, for fear of being recalled and sent on board the prison ship and there end his days; but as soon as he was exchanged he would do it.

If this gentleman, through fear, dare not contradict such a piece of falsehood, I dare, and if I was again confined on board the prison ship in New-York, dare again take the boat and make my escape, although at the risk of my life.

Some of the captains went on board the prison ship with Mr. SPROAT, a few moments, but did not go off the deck.

In justice to myself and country, I am obliged to publish the above.

Capt. ROVER.

Boston, August 7, 1782.

10. AFFIDAVIT CONCERNING CAPTAIN HARRIS, ONE OF THE COMMITTEE WHO SIGNED THE REPORT ON THE CONDITION OF THE PRISONERS ON BOARD THE *OLD JERSEY*.

[From *The Pennsylvania Packet, or, the General Advertiser*, Vol. XI. Numb. 935, Philadelphia. Tuesday, September 10, 1782.]

PENNSYLVANIA, ss.

The voluntary Affidavit of JOHN KITTS, of the city of Philadelphia, late mate of the sloop *Industry*, commanded by ROBERT HARRIS, taken before the subscriber, chief justice of the commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the sixteenth day of July, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred eighty-two.

THIS deponent saith, that in the month of November last he was walking in Front-street with the said ROBERT HARRIS, and saw in his hand a paper, which he told this deponent he had received from a certain captain KUNN, who had been lately from New-York, where he had been a prisoner; and that this deponent understood and believed it was a permit or pass to go to New-York with any vessel, as it was blank and subscribed by admiral Arbuthnot; that he does not know that the said ROBERT HARRIS ever made any improper use of the said paper, but is inclined to think he did not; as he soon after told this deponent that he had returned it to captain KUNN again. And further saith not.

JOHN KITTS.

Sworn, at Philadelphia, the day
and year abovesaid, before

THO. M'KEAN.

II. AFFIDAVIT OF JOHN COCHRAN. DENYING THE TRUTH OF
THE STATEMENTS CONTAINED IN THE REPORT OF THE
COMMITTEE OF OFFICERS.

[From *The Pennsylvania Packet, or, the General Advertiser*, Vol. XI. Numb. 935,
Philadelphia, Tuesday, September 10, 1782.]

PENNSYLVANIA, ss.

The voluntary Affidavit of JOHN COCHRAN, of the city of Philadelphia, late mate of the ship *Admiral Zoutman*, of Philadelphia, taken before the subscriber, chief justice of the commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the 16th day of July, 1782.

THE said deponent saith, that he was taken prisoner on board the aforesaid ship on the 12th day of March last, by the ship *Garland*, belonging to the king of Great-Britain, and carried into the city of New-York on the 15th of the same month, when he was immediately put on board the prison ship *Jersey*, with the whole crew of the *Admiral Zoutman*, and was close confined there until the first day of this month, when he made his escape; that the people on board the said prison-ship *Jersey* were very sickly, insomuch that he is firmly perswaded, out of near a thousand persons, perfectly healthy when put on board the same ship, during the time of his confinement on board, there are not more than between three or four hundred now alive; that when he made his escape there were not three hundred men well on board, but upwards of one hundred and forty very sick, as he understood and was informed by the physicians; that there were five or six men buried daily under a bank on the shore, without coffins; that all the larboard side of the said prison ship *Jersey*, was made use of as a hospital for the sick, and was so offensive that he was obliged constantly to hold his nose as he passed from the gun-room up the hatchway, or he believes the smell would have knocked him down; that he seen maggots creeping out of a wound of one SULLIVAN's shoulder, who was the mate of a vessel out of Virginia; and that his wound remained undressed for several days together; that every man was put into the hold a little after sun-down every night, and the hatches put over him; and that the tubs, which were

kept for the use of the sick, for their excrements, were placed under the ladder from the hatchway to the hold, and so offensive, day and night, that they were almost intolerable, and increased the number of the sick daily. This deponent further saith, that the bilge-water was very injurious in the hold; and the same ship, from the lower deck to the hold, was muddy and dirty, and never was cleaned out or sweetened during the whole time he was there, nor, as he was informed, and believes to be true, for many years before; for fear, as it was reported, the provisions might be injured thereby; that the sick, in the hospital part of the said prison-ship *Jersey*, had no sheets of Russia or any other linen, nor beds or bedding furnished them; and those who had no beds of their own, of whom there were great numbers, were not even allowed a hammock, but were obliged to lie on the planks; that he was on board the said prison-ship, when Captain ROBERT HARRIS and others, with DAVID SPROAT, the commissary of naval prisoners, came on board her, and that none of them went, or attempted to go below decks, in said ship, to see the situation of the prisoners, nor did they ask a single question respecting that matter, to this deponent's knowledge or belief; for that he was present the whole time they were on board. And further this deponent saith not.

JOHN COCHIRAN.

Sworn, at Philadelphia, the day
and year abovesaid, before

THEO. M'KEAN.

II.

CAPTAIN DANIEL ABORN.

This gentleman, the commander of the *Chance*, was a member of one of the oldest and most respectable families in New England.

One of this name was an early settler at Salem, Massachusetts, whence, early in the last century, his grandson, SAMUEL, removed to Rhode Island, and settled at or near Wickford, where he died, in 1764, aged sixty-four years.

SAMUEL'S son, JOSEPH, married ELIZABETH SCRANTON; and four children, WILLIAM, DANIEL, ELIZABETH, and MARY (wife of SYLVESTER RHODES), were the fruits of their union.

DANIEL, his second son, the subject of this sketch, was born in Newport, Rhode Island, on the first of July, 1749. He was married on the eighth day of January, 1769, to MARY ARNOLD, of Cranston, Rhode Island; and two children—1, JONATHAN, born on the twenty-second of August, 1772, and, 2, DORCAS TOURTELLOT, born on the fifteenth of June, 1774—were the fruits of the union.

He commanded the privateer *Chance*, when she was captured by the *Belisarius*, and he shared with his officers and crew the horrors of a confinement on the *Old Jersey*.

While thus imprisoned, as related in the *Recollections* of Captain DRING, he was appointed a member of the Committee which waited on General WASHINGTON, to solicit his interference in behalf of the prisoners; and he was, also, one of those who signed the Report which, to some extent, exonerated the British officers from the charges of oppression with which they were charged.

He was subsequently paroled; and through his solicitations, as stated in the text, the crew of the *Chance* were released by exchange, after an imprisonment of about two months.

On the first day of December, 1783, Captain ABORN sailed for the West Indies, in a fine vessel; but as nothing more was heard of him, it is supposed that he was lost during a severe gale which occurred on the third or fourth day after his departure from Providence.



The fine portrait of Captain ABORN which illustrates this brief sketch of his life, was taken from the original crayon drawing belonging to his grandson, ROBERT W. ABORN, Esq., of the city of New York.

III.

SAILING-MASTER SYLVESTER RHODES.

SYLVESTER RHODES, Sailing-master of the Privateer *Chance*, was descended from one of the early settlers of New England—ZACHARY RHODES, who came from England to Plymouth at an early day, and subsequently settled, with his wife JOANNA, daughter of WILLIAM ARNOLD, one of the original settlers of the State, at Pawtuxet, Rhode Island.¹

MALACHI RHODES, son of ZACHARY, had a son, who was also named MALACHI; and the latter had a son named JAMES, who was born in 1710, and died on the ninth of October, 1797.

JAMES RHODES had three sons: ROBERT, who was born on the first of April, 1742, married PHEBE SMITH, on the seventh of April, 1763; and died on the twenty-fifth of March, 1821;² SYLVESTER, the subject

¹ Mr. RHODES was "potentially banished" from Massachusetts, because he was "in the way of dipping"—that is, he was a Baptist (ROGER WILLIAMS *to the General Court of Massachusetts*, 15th. 9 mo. 1655). Together with his brother, STEPHEN ARNOLD, he was admitted a freeman of the Colony, at May Term of the General Court, in 1658; and at the same Term, appeared as the Representative in that body for the town of Providence. In 1659, he was associated with ROGER WILLIAMS and four others in the same office; and in 1661, 1662, and 1663, he was in the same office, and discharged its duties with evident honor and usefulness.

² His granddaughter, ELIZA ALLEN—a daughter of General CHRISTOPHER RHODES, of Pawtuxet, Rhode Island—married Hon. JOHN RUSSELL BARTLETT, Secretary of State of Rhode Island, well known to every student of American history; another, SALLIE ABORN, sister of the late Mrs. BARTLETT, married Hon. HENRY B. ANTHONY, Senator of the United States from Rhode Island; and a third, PHEBE RHODES, daughter of Colonel WILLIAM RHODES, married GEORGE C. ARNOLD, Esq., of Providence.

HENRY T. DROWNE, Esq., of New York, and Rev. T. STAFFORD DROWNE, of Brooklyn, N. Y., are his great-grandsons: SARAH ARNOLD, the estimable wife of the former of these, a daughter of GEORGE C. ARNOLD, Esq., before referred to, is his great-granddaughter.

of this sketch ; and MALACHI, who was born on the twentieth of July, 1748, and died on the twelfth of February, 1832.

SYLVESTER, the second son of JAMES RHODES, was born at Warwick, Rhode Island, on the twenty-first of November, 1745 ; married MARY, daughter of SAMUEL and ELIZABETH (*Seranton*) ABORN—the youngest sister of Captain DANIEL ABORN of the Privateer *Chance*, and was occupied, generally, as a ship-master.

He entered the public service at an early period of the war of the Revolution ; and he continued to serve his country, sometimes at sea, at others ashore, until his death, in 1782.

He was with Commodore WHIPPLE on his first cruise ; and, as Prize-master, he carried into Boston the first prize captured by that officer : in the military operations in Rhode Island, he also served with honor and usefulness.

He was subsequently one of the eight Prize-masters on board the Privateer *General Washington*, which sailed in May, 1780 ; and he was at the head of the list of Prize-masters on board the Privateer *Belisarius*, when she sailed from Boston and was captured and carried to New York, in 1781.

In 1782, he was Sailing-master on board the Privateer *Chance*, of which his brother-in-law, DANIEL ABORN, was the commander ; and, with the crew of that vessel, he was again carried to New York, and confined on board the *Jersey*, as has been related in the text of this volume.

When the crew of the *Chance* was exchanged, it is supposed that Sailing-master RHODES was among those invalids on Blackwell's Island who were left in captivity,¹ and his brother-in-law, Captain ABORN, subsequently renewed his exertions to obtain his release, as he had done that of his shipmates.

As RHODES was an officer in the army, as well as on the Privateer, the enemy refused to release him as they had released his associates—man for man ;² and not until his father had secured the interposition

¹ Vide page 117, *ante*.

² Miss ABORN, his granddaughter, thus writes concerning this difficulty in effecting his exchange :—

“The English refused to exchange him for a private ; and the Americans refused to exchange an officer for him, *because he was taken on a privateer*, saying they wanted all the officers to exchange for theirs belonging to the regular army.” *Letter, dated Providence, April 3, 1865.*

of a family in Newport whose connections in New York were friendly to the Government, was any progress made in effecting his discharge, notwithstanding the very feeble state of his health.

At length, through the kind offices referred to, his parole was secured, and Captain ABORN proceeded to New York to convey him to his family ; but so far had disease performed its work, he never saw, in life, the home and family which were so dear to him. He died on board the cartel, while on her passage through the Sound, on the third of November, 1782 ; and his body having been taken ashore at New Haven, it was interred at that place.

His widow and five children survived, the former of whom, MARY (*Aborn*) RHODES, was afterwards celebrated in the annals of Rhode Island, as the last *original* creditor of the State, for an unpaid balance of her Revolutionary debt—a liability, notwithstanding its character, which she has strangely *repudiated*, although it was duly certified, on the eighteenth of September, 1795, “agreeably to an Act made and “passed by the General Assembly of the State, at their January Session, A. D. 1795,” by the General Treasurer of the State.*

She survived all her children, and died on the twelfth of April, 1852, aged nearly ninety-eight years.

The following were the children of Sailing-master SYLVESTER RHODES and MARY (*Aborn*), his wife : 1. JOSEPH, born on the first of June, 1772, died on the eighteenth of September, 1790 ; 2. ELIZABETH, born on the twenty-seventh of September, 1775 ; married THOMAS ABORN, and died on the eighth of February, 1812 ;¹ 3. SALLY, born on the seventeenth of August, 1777, married JOHN A. ABORN, and died on the eighteenth of February, 1800 ; and, 4. SYLVESTER, born on the twenty-fourth of July, 1780, married HARRIET KNIGHT, and died on the eighteenth of February, 1800.

* RICHMOND'S Rhode Island Repudiation, ix.

¹ Miss MARY HENRIETTA ABORN, born January 7, 1809, who has kindly furnished much information on this subject, and greatly interested herself in procuring from others what she did not herself possess, is a daughter of this BETSEY.

IV.

WILLIAM DROWNE.

A PRISONER ON THE *JERSEY*.

WILLIAM DROWNE was born in Providence, Rhode Island, on the seventeenth of April, 1755.

He was a descendant of LEONARD DROWNE, who came early in life from England, and settled near Portsmouth, New Hampshire, where he pursued the business of shipbuilding until 1692, when, in consequence of the Indian wars, he removed to Boston, Massachusetts. He died on the thirty-first of October, 1729, in his eighty-third year, leaving four sons and two daughters, of whom the eldest, SOLOMON (who was born on the twenty-third of January, 1681, and died July the twenty-sixth, 1744), was the grandfather of the subject of the present sketch.

His father, also named SOLOMON, was born on the fourth of October, 1706, settled in Providence in 1730 as a merchant, and for half a century bore a prominent part in the affairs of the town. For several years before his death, which occurred on the twenty-fifth of June, 1780, he served as a member of the Upper House of Assembly of the State; and was much esteemed and respected for his strict probity, his sound judgment, and many sterling traits of character.

WILLIAM DROWNE, after acquiring a good education for his time, turned his attention to military affairs. We find him, on the second of June, 1775, an officer in the Mendon Regiment, Colonel READ's, and stationed at Roxbury, Massachusetts, in order to cover that point during the engagement on Bunker Hill; with which command he remained until the close of the year. His next commission, as Lieutenant of the First Rhode Island Regiment, issued on the eighteenth of January, 1776, runs as follows:—

BY THE HONORABLE

NICHOLAS COOKE, Esq.,



Governor, Captain-General, and Commander in Chief,
 of and over the *English* Colony of *Rhode Island*, and
Providence Plantations, in *New England*, in *America*.

To WILLIAM DROWNE, Gentleman—Greeting.

WHEREAS for the Preservation of the Rights and Liberties of His Majesty's loyal and faithful Subjects in this Colony, and the other Colonies in *America*, the GENERAL ASSEMBLY, at the Session held at *Providence* on the last *Wednesday* in *October*, A. D. 1775, ordered a Regiment, to consist of Five Hundred Men, to be raised; and at the Session held at *Providence*, on the Second *Monday* in *January*, A. D. 1776, augmented said Regiment to Seven Hundred and Fifty men, exclusive of an Artillery Company to the same belonging; and at the same Session passed an Act ordering another Regiment, consisting of Seven hundred and Fifty men, to be raised, and embodying the said Two Regiments into One Brigade: And whereas you the said WILLIAM DROWNE are appointed Lieutenant of the First Company in the said last mentioned Regiment, I do therefore hereby, in His Majesty's Name, GEORGE the Third, by the Grace of GOD, King of *Great Britain*, &c., authorize, empower, and commission, you the said WILLIAM DROWNE to have, take, and exercise the Office of Lieutenant of the First Company in the said last mentioned Regiment, and to command, guide, and conduct the same, or any Part thereof. And in case of an Invasion or Assault of a common Enemy, to infest or disturb this or any other of His Majesty's Colonies in *America*, you are to alarm and gather together the *Company* under your Command, or any Part thereof, as you shall deem sufficient, and therewith, to the utmost of your Skill and Ability, you are to Resist, Expel, Kill and Destroy them, in order to preserve the Interest of His Majesty, and His good Subjects, in these Parts. You are also to follow such Instructions, Directions, and Orders, as shall from Time to Time be given forth, either by the GENERAL ASSEMBLY or your superior Officers.

And for your so doing this Commission shall be your sufficient Warrant.

Given under my Hand, and the Seal of the said Colony, this Eighteenth Day of January, in the Year of our Lord One Thousand Seven Hundred and Seventy-six.

NICHAS. COOKE.

By His Honor's Command,
HENRY WARD, Sec'y.

In a letter to his brother, Doctor SOLOMON DROWNE,¹ written at Providence, on the twentieth of January, 1776, he thus alluded to this appointment: "I arrived from Camp a few days since. No berth offering that suited, I came here upon hearing that the General Assembly were about raising a Brigade, to be Stationed at Newport, and through the influence of Major Thompson, got the first Lieutenancy in the First or Colonel's Company,—the Brigade to consist of 1500, Colonel Babcock colonel of our Regiment, Christopher Lip-pitt Lieut.-Col., and Adam Comstock Major; Capt. Kit Olney Major of Brigade, Bill Tyler Adjutant, Jno. Rogers promoted to a lieutenant of one of the Trains of Artillery, &c., &c.² We have had frequent Alarms lately by Wallace's coming up the river, as far as Warwick Neck. Once he landed a number of Marines, &c., upon the Island of Prudence: we had about fifty Minute Men thereon,

¹ SOLOMON DROWNE, M. D., was born in Providence, R. I., on the eleventh of March, 1753; and after graduating at Brown University, and completing his medical studies in the University of Pennsylvania, he entered the Revolutionary Army as surgeon. At the conclusion of the war he practised medicine for a time in his native city; visited the Medical Schools and Hospitals in London and Paris in 1784; was one of the founders of Marietta, Ohio, and delivered there a Funeral Eulogy on General VARNUM, and also the first Anniversary Oration in commemoration of the settlement, on the seventh of April, 1789. After residing for several years in Virginia and Pennsylvania, he returned to Rhode Island in 1801, and settled in Foster, where he passed the remainder of his days in professional, agricultural, and literary pursuits. In 1811, he was appointed Professor of Materia Medica and Botany in Brown University; and in 1819 served as a delegate to the Convention which formed the National Pharmacopœia. During his latter years, he published a work on agriculture, and many scientific and literary papers, and delivered several Addresses and Orationz, all of which bear the marks of a highly cultivated taste, ripe scholarship, and extensive research. He died on the fifth of February, 1834, in his eighty-first year.

² ARNOLD's History of Rhode Island, ii. 367.

“ who after firing three rounds were obliged to retreat (in boats), the
 “ number of the enemy being much superior. We had one man killed,
 “ and several wounded ; and 'tis said, several of theirs were seen to
 “ fall, but as they took the ground, it's a matter of uncertainty, although
 “ very probable. They then set fire to the Buildings (7 or 8 in num-
 “ ber), which soon consumed the same ; as they did some others on
 “ some other Islands. Some of the Companies from here, have been
 “ almost constantly down to Warwick Neck, for several weeks past ;
 “ especially the Artillery Company, who carried several pieces of Can-
 “ non, and gave the fleet, consisting of 10 or 12 Sail, a small cannon-
 “ ading. There is now a Nine pounder upon a field carriage down on
 “ the said Neck, there to be kept, which was carried from here on
 “ Sunday last. So much for Master Wallace.” * * *

Another commission, by order of the Council of War of the State, bearing date the twenty-first day of December of the same year, and with the signatures of the same Governor and Secretary of State as the preceding, constituted Mr. DROWNE Adjutant of the First Regiment of Militia in the County of Providence and State of Rhode Island, Colonel BOWEN's ; not, however, “ in order to preserve the Interest of
 “ His Majesty's Colonies and His good Subjects,” but “ the Interest of
 “ the good People in these Parts,” against the “ Invasion or Assault” of the forces of GEORGE III. In 1777, he was Adjutant in General SPENCER's Regiment, having its head-quarters at Pawtuxet ; and in 1778, served as Quartermaster-general, with the rank of Captain.

Mr. DROWNE possessed an adventurous and courageous spirit, and had for some time been earnestly desirous of entering the naval service. In the fall of 1776, he was invited to serve as an officer on board the Frigate *Providence*, commanded by ABRAHAM WHIPPLE. He subsequently arranged to go on the *Warren*, but the occupation of Newport by the enemy's fleet prevented the frigate from sailing during the whole of the year 1777. ESEK HOPKINS, Commander-in-chief of the American Navy, while stationed at Providence, described a plan for burning the British vessels by means of fire-ships ; and although large bounties were offered by Congress, the project proved unsuccessful. Prevented from sailing from Rhode Island, Mr. DROWNE,

in April, 1778, went to Boston, and embarked in a private sloop-of-war; and for the next three years was actively employed in various privateering expeditions.

Early in July, 1779, he was one of the officers of the Brigantine *Saratoga*, Captain JAMES MUNRO, commander; and when about to sail from New London, was temporarily detained by an embargo laid on all vessels in the port by the commanding officer, Captain SALTONSTALL, in order to repel the expected attack of the British fleet. During this cruise, they engaged some heavily armed vessels of war, fought with much bravery, and took several prizes. In August, however, they were captured and carried prisoners into the port of New York.

He next sailed, on the eighteenth of May, 1780, in the *General Washington*, owned by Mr. JOHN BROWN, of Providence, and fitted out from that port. Among the officers were JAMES MUNRO, commander, SYLVESTER RHODES, PARDON BOWEN, and THOMAS DRING, the latter the author of the present work. In a *Journal* kept by Mr. DROWNE on board this vessel, he thus humorously alluded to his late capture: "The cruise is for two months and a half, though should New York fetch us up again, the time may be protracted; but it is not in the bargain to pay that potent city a visit this bout. It may easily be imagined what a *sensible mortification* it must be to dispense with the *delicious sweets* of a Prison-ship. But though the *Washington* is deemed a prime sailor, and is well armed, I will not be too sanguine in the prospect of escaping, as 'the race is not always to the swift' nor the battle to the strong,' and as a disappointment in that case would be doubly aggravating. But, as I said before, 'tis not in the Articles to go there this time, especially as 'tis said the prisoners are very much crowded there already, and it would be a piece of unfeeling inhumanity to be adding to their unavoidable inconvenience by our presence. Nor could we, in such a case, by any means expect that Madam Fortune would deign to smile so propitious as she did before, in the promotion of an exchange so much sooner than our most sanguine expectations flattered us with; as 'tis said to be with no small difficulty that a parole can be obtained, much more an exchange." This expedition resulted in the capture of several ves-

sels, among which were the *Robust*, *Lord Sandwich*, *Barrington*, and the *Spitfire*, a British privateer.

On the twenty-eighth of April, 1781, Mr. DROWNE left Providence for Boston, and during the next few days was busily occupied in arranging the preliminary matters for a cruise in the *Belisarius*, obtaining a pass from his Excellency Governor JOHN HANCOCK for the ship's company, storing the provisions, water, etc. This admirable vessel, "of about Five Hundred Tons Burthen, mounting Twenty "Nine-Pounders, JAMES MUNRO, Commander," with a crew of over a hundred and sixty, sailed on the sixth of May, "on a Five Months "Cruise against the enemies of the United States of America," as expressed in the original printed "Articles of Agreement." Mr. DROWNE's *Journal* of this expedition abounds in interesting incidents and adventures, which, however, were brought to an abrupt close on the twenty-sixth of July. Captured, and carried into the port of New York, he, with the other officers, was transferred to the *Jersey* Prison-ship, where close confinement and unhealthy food soon began to make serious inroads upon his previously robust constitution. Through the influence of some English friends, he was permitted to be absent a short time in November, and visited Newport; but did not succeed in regaining his former health. A continuance of the same imprisonment in the excessively crowded and pestilential between-decks of the *Jersey*, developed a malady from which he never recovered; although with the constant care of his brother, Doctor DROWNE, after his release in 1783, his life was prolonged to the ninth of August, 1786, when he died.

The Providence Gazette and Country Journal, Vol. XXIII., No. 1180, Saturday, August 12th, contains the following obituary notice:

"Last Wednesday Morning Mr. WILLIAM DROWNE, of this Town, "Merchant, departed this Life, in the 32d Year of his Age, after a "long consumption, originally occasioned by his Sufferings on board a "British Prison Ship, a little before Peace took Place, of which he "hath long languished with exemplary Patience and Fortitude. His "virtuous Character, benevolent Disposition, Integrity of Conduct, "and agreeable Manners, endeared him to his Friends and Acquain- "tance, and render his Death a real Loss, not only to his particular

“ Friends, but also to the Town and State of which he was a worthy
“ Member.

“ ‘ As Smoke, that rises from the kindly Fires,
“ ‘ Is seen this Moment, and the next expires;
“ ‘ As empty Clouds by rising Winds are tost,
“ ‘ Their fleeting Forms scarce sooner found than lost,
“ ‘ So vanishes our State; so pass our Days;
“ ‘ So Life but opens now, and now decays;
“ ‘ The Cradle and the Tomb, alas! so nigh,
“ ‘ To live is scarce distinguished from to die!’ ”

T. S. D.

Brooklyn, N. Y., April 14, 1865.

CORRESPONDENCE.

[From the Drowne Papers.]

[The following, from the originals in the possession of the family, will be found very interesting, as documents which throw light on the history of the period in which they were written, particularly on that portion which relates to the treatment of those who were confined on the *Jersey* Prison-ship.]

1. DR. SOLOMON DROWNE TO HIS BROTHER, WILLIAM DROWNE, A PRISONER ON THE *JERSEY* PRISON-SHIP.

Newport, Septr. 15th, 1781.

DEAR BILLY:

Since the venerable *Ansonean Jersey* did not sail with the late Chesapeak-bound Fleet; and as there is no probability she will put to Sea soon, I write for you to strive by all means to gain leave of absence for a while. There need be no apprehensions about the matter on the part of your Commander;—for when, under the same circumstances, you left there before, you did not fail to return.—If Persuasion is necessary to induce you to revisit us, I would present to your imagination the once favorite spot which gave you birth;—family endearments, not beneath the attention of a generous mind;

and friends who much regret your so long absence. Can you to these prefer an idle breath of fame, mere rotten fume, sneaked from the never-to-be-forgotten *Jersey*, because she semi-circled the Globe? There is, moreover, a good Opportunity for you to come now, as a Sloop belonging to Providence, bound to the very Port where you are, and which wafts you this letter, will return thither soon.

The Family are well, and expect you with impatience. Little Sophia wants to see her uncle Billy. I would solicit you 'till I am out of breath with solicitations, if [*they*] will avail anything, that you wou'd not disappoint them.

This day five years ago I quitted N. York.

Five years precisely have the British been possessed of it.

I must refer you to Captⁿ BowEN for news, forⁿ and domest^{ck}, as I am in haste to return to Providence.

I am, my dear Brother, with fervent wishes for your health and serenity in every condition of life, and shift of Fortune,

Yours affectionately,

SOLOMON DROWNE.

Mr. WILLIAM DROWNE,
On board the *Jersey*,
N. York Harbour.

2. WILLIAM DROWNE TO MRS. (JAMES) SELHRIG, OF NEW YORK.

Dear M[adam]

I some time since took the freedom tho' not free to write to Mrs. SELHRIG from hence on the Subject of my exchange, and not having the Satisfaction to receive for a considerable time any reply either written or verbal, and being positively assured of the letter being duly delivered her, I must candidly confess some hard thoughts of Mrs. S.'s Benevolence began reluctantly to make their encroachments upon me, not that I am by any means thought you Madam bound to oblige me, more than another acquaintance, but as I was most willing to be indebted to you for that invaluable obligation. However from some Intelligence of a later date I have since asked pardon of my heart for the injurious taxation and shall ever entertain the most

grateful sense of Her politeness and good will towards me in attempting to get me on shore. Such a circumstance would have given me sensible pleasure as I should have been extremely happy in seeing Mrs. SELHRIG, Mrs. CAMPBELL, &c. But having been some time from home my Garb is rather too much indisposed to wish any further attempts of the kind. You are pleased to send me Word that Captⁿ S. HAZARD should say that in case I had made myself known to him when he was on board, he would obtained my exchange with Capt. MUNRO, &c. I was on the Quarter Deck when he was here but as he did not observe me, our acquaintance being slight, and seeing so many make applications to him, I did not think it justifiable to attempt availing myself of his humanity. I should have been very happy to owe the obligation to Captⁿ HAZARD, as to him We were impelled to strike and he is a Gentleman of Worth and Honor.

Having a letter to Mr. GEORGE DEBLOIS Mercht. I have written him and received many Civilities in consequence, with the Assurance of being exchanged in the next flag. Capt. WM. DEBLOIS, who once had the misfortune to be taken by a ship in which I was, has with several other Gentlemen, Jos. APLIN, Esq^r and a Mr. JAY kindly interested themselves in my behalf, so that I am not without hopes of standing some sort of a Chance in one of the flags now here. Should that happy event be the Case any Commands Mrs. S. may have to R^d Island I shall be happy to execute, and in the mean time,—

With the warmest Sentiments of grateful Esteem,

Madam, your much obliged,

most humble Servant,

WILLIAM DROWNE.

My best Compliments to Mrs. CAMPBELL, and Miss BARDIN, tho' I don't know but she has taken a Fancy to another name.—Perhaps they may not have heard of the marriage of FANNY WANTON to Mr. SAML. SNOW of Providence.

I need not say that I should be very happy to receive a line from you. I have been very unwell, but by following the Doct^{rs} Prescription and the blessing of a good Constitution have got some better.

Mrs. SELHRIG.

Prison Ship, Septr. 25th, [1781.]

3. WILLIAM DROWNE TO MRS. JOHNSTON, OF NEW YORK.

Jersey Prison Ship, Sept. 25th, '81.

MADAM :

Your letter to Capt JOSHUA SAWYER of the 23d Inst. came on board this moment, which I being requested to answer, take the freedom to do, and with sensible regret, as it announces the dissolution of that good man. It was an event very unexpected. 'Tis true He had been for some days very Ill, but a turn in his favor cancel'd all further apprehension of his being dangerous, and but Yesterday he was able without Assistance to go upon deck ; said he felt much better, and without any further Complaints, at the usual time turn'd into his Hammock, and as was suppos'd went to sleep. Judge our Surprise and Astonishment this morning at being informed of his being found a lifeless Corse.

Could any thing nourishing or comfortable have been procur'd for him during his Illness, 'tis possible He might now have been a well man. But Heaven thought proper to take him to itself, and we must not repine.

A Coffin would have been procured in case it could be done seasonably, but his situation render'd a speedy Interment unavoidable. Agreeably to which 10 or a dozen Gentlemen of his acquaintance presented a petition to the Commanding Officer on board, requesting the favor that they might be permitted under the Inspection of a file of Soldiers to pay the last sad duties to a Gentleman of merit : which he humanely granted, and in the Afternoon his remains were taken on Shore and committed to their native dust in as decent a manner as our situation would admit. Myself in room of a better officiated in the sacred office of Chaplain and read prayers over the Corpse previous to its final close in its gloomy mansion.

I have given You these particulars, Madam, as I was sensible it must give you great satisfaction to hear he had some friends on board.

Your benevolent and good intentions to him shall (if Heaven permits my return) be safely delivered to his afflicted Wife, to give her the sensible Consolation that her late much esteem'd and affectionate Husband was not destitute of a Friend, who wish'd to do him all the good offices in her power, had not the hand of fate prevented.

If you wish to know any thing relative to myself,—if you will give Yourself the trouble to call on Mrs. (JAMES) SELHRIG, she will inform You; or Jos. APLIX, Esq^{re}.

You will please to excuse the Liberty I have taken being an entire stranger. I have no Views in it but those of giving, as I said before satisfaction to one who took a friendly part towards a Gentleman deceas'd, whom I very much esteem'd.

Your goodness will not look with a critical eye over the numerous Imperfections of this Epistle.

I am, Madam, with every sentiment of Respect,

Your most Obed^t Serv^t.,

WILLIAM DROWNE.

Mrs. JOHNSTON [*of New York*].

P. S.—There is one JOSEPH JEFFERS desires me to let me know that he has paid the greatest Attention to Captⁿ SAWYER, during his Illness, in tending upon, and cooking for him, &c. which I believe he has faithfully performed, and if you could do any thing for him as to his exchange—it wou'd be a deserving reward. He belongs to R^d Island.

4. DR. SOLOMON DROWNE TO MISS SALLY DROWNE.

Providence, Octr. 17th 1781.

DEAR SALLY,

We have not forgot you;—but if we think strongly on other objects the memory of you returns, more grateful than the airs which 'fan the 'Summer,' or all the golden products of y^e Autumn.

The Cartel is still detained, for what reason is not fully known. Perhaps they meditate an attack upon some unguarded, unsuspecting quarter, and already in idea glint their eyes, with the smoke of burning Towns and Villages, and are soothed by the sounds of deep distress.—Forbid it, Guardian of America!—and rather let the reason be their fear that we should know the state of their shattered Navy, and declining affairs.—However, Bill is yet a Prisoner, and still must feel, if not for himself, yet what a mind like his will ever feel for others. In a letter I received from him about three weeks since, he mentioned,

that having a letter to Mr. GEORGE DEBLOIS, he sent it, accompanied with one he wrote requesting his influence towards effecting his return the next Flag,—that Mr. DEBLOIS being indisposed, his cousin, Capt^r WM. DEBLOIS, taken by MONRO last year, came on board to see him, with a present from Mr. DEBLOIS of some Tea, Sugar, Wine, Rum, &c. and the offer of any other Civilities that lay in the power of either:—This was Beneficence and true Urbanity:—that he was not destitute of Cash, that best friend in Adversity, except some other best friends—that as long as he had Health, he should—he had like to have said—be happy. In a word, he bears up with his wonted fortitude, and good spirits, as we say,—nor discovers the least repining at his fate. But you and I who sleep on beds of down, and inhale the untainted, cherishing air, surrounded by most endeared connexions, know that his cannot be the most delectable of Situations; therefore, with impatience we will look for his happy return to the Circle of his Friends.

Your affectionate Brother,

SOLOMON DROWNE.

5. DOCTOR SOLOMON DROWNE TO MRS. MARCY DROWNE.

Newport, November 14th, 1781.

RESPECTED MOTHER,

I found BILLY much better than I expected, the account we received of his situation having been considerably exaggerated: However, we ought to be thankful that we were not deceived by a too favourable account, and so left him to the care of Strangers, when he might most need the soothing aid of closest relatives. He is very weak yet, and as a second relapse might endanger his reduced, tottering system, think it advisable not to set off for home with him till the wind is more favourable. He is impatient for the moment of its shifting, as he is anxious to see you all.

The boat is just going.

Adieu.

Your affectionate

SOLOMON DROWNE.

MRS. MARCY DROWNE.

Providence, R. I.

V.

CAPTAIN ROSWELL PALMER.

A PRISONER ON THE *JERSEY*.**New York*, April 15th, 1865.

HENRY T. DROWNE, Esq.

MY DEAR SIR:

Since I wrote you in February last, having found the pencilled memoranda of my Father's experience while a prisoner on board the "*Old Jersey*" during the Revolution, I hasten to enclose you a copy, in fulfilment of my promise. These reminiscences were taken down from his own lips, while on his last visit to this city, in 1840; and as they were minuted by my own hand, I can bear witness to the accuracy of the record. Those who knew the relator personally will need no assurance of the truthfulness of the incidents.

I add the following biographical sketch, in compliance with your earnest request:—

The late Captain ROSWELL PALMER was born in Stonington, Connecticut, August, 1764; and as he was about seventeen at the time of his capture by the English, the term of his imprisonment must have commenced in 1781. Having several relatives in the army, he sought to join his fortunes with theirs and his country's; but was not accepted, on account of his immature years. His uncle, however, received him as an assistant in the Commissary Department; and when the brig *Pilgrim*, of Stonington, was commissioned to make war on the public enemy, the rejected volunteer was warmly welcomed on board by his kinsman, Captain HUMPHREY CRARY.

The first night after putting to sea, the *Pilgrim* encountered a

* I am indebted for this interesting sketch of one of the last survivors of the prisoners who were confined on the "*Old Jersey*," to his son, WILLIAM PITT PALMER, Esq., of New York, whose temporary resumption of the pen, for this purpose, will be heartily welcomed by many a friend of by-gone years.—H. B. D.

British fleet just entering the Vineyard Sound. A chase and running fight of several hours ensued, during which my father was stationed aloft, on account of his nautical expertness and alacrity, to keep the top-sails in the best trim, and a bright look-out for any chance prospect of escape. At length a random shot carried away the mast on which the young sailor was perched, and the crippled vessel was shortly after compelled to surrender. The prize was taken into Holmes' Hole, and the crew subsequently brought to New York. They were all put in irons, and in that condition passed through Hell Gate, soon after the foundering of the British frigate *Huzzar* in that perilous strait, and ultimately transferred to the *Old Jersey*. This was originally an English ship-of-the-line, and being old and unwieldy, had been converted into a Prison-ship for rebellious Yankees. She never left her anchorage at the Wallabout—whether from decrepitude or the intolerable burden of woes and wrongs accumulated in her wretched hulk—but sunk slowly down at last into the subjacent ooze, as if to hide her shame from human sight; and more than forty years after, my father pointed out to me at low tide huge remnants of her unburied skeleton.

On board of this dreadful Bastile were crowded, year after year, some fourteen hundred prisoners, mostly Americans. The discipline was very strict, while the smallest possible attention was paid by their warders to the sufferings of the captives. Cleanliness was simply an impossibility where the quarters were so narrow, the occupants so numerous, and little opportunity afforded for washing the person, or the tatters that sought to hide its nakedness. Fortunate was the wretch who possessed a "clean linen rag," for this, placed in his bosom, seemed to attract to it crowds of his crawling tormentors, whose squatter-sovereignty could be disposed of by wholesale at his pleasure.

The food of the prisoners consisted mainly of condemned sea-biscuit and navy beef, which had become worthless from long voyaging in many climes years before. These biscuits were so worm-eaten that a slight pressure of the hand reduced them to dust, which rose in little clouds of insubstantial aliment, as if in mockery of the half-famished expectants. For variety, a ration called "Burgoo" was prepared several times a week, consisting of mouldy oatmeal and

water, boiled in two great "Coppers," and served out in tubs, like swill to swine.

By degrees, they grew callous to each other's miseries, and alert to seize any advantage over their fellow-sufferers. Many played cards day and night, utterly regardless of the dying or the dead around them. The deaths averaged "about two a day." The remains were huddled into blankets, and so slightly interred on the neighboring slope, that scores of them, bared by the rains, were always visible to their less fortunate comrades left to pine in hopeless captivity. The relics of these martyrs to British cruelty have been piously collected and preserved by the citizens of Brooklyn, to be honored with appropriate sepulture.

After having been imprisoned about a year and a half, my father, one night, during a paroxysm of fever, rushed on deck, and jumped overboard. The shock restored him to consciousness; he was soon rescued, and the next morning taken by the Surgeon-General's orders to his quarters in Cherry street, near Pearl, where he remained till the close of the war. The kind Doctor had taken a fancy to his handsome Yankee patient, whom he treated with fatherly kindness, giving him books to read, having him present at his operations and dissections, and finally urging him to seek his fortune in Europe, where he should receive a good surgical education, free of charge. The temptation was very great, but the remembrance of a nearer home and dearer friends, unseen for years, was greater, and to them the long-lost returned at last, as one from the dead.

Finding himself now at liberty to resume the course he had traced out for himself in early life, he engaged in the merchant service, and, passing from grade to grade, obtained the command of a ship while yet a young man. In this situation he continued for several years, till the claims of a growing family obliged him to relinquish his maritime enterprises. Accordingly, he removed to Stockbridge, Massachusetts, where he engaged in agricultural pursuits, bringing to that peaceful and primitive occupation the same clear insight and resolute perseverance which had characterized his nautical career. His farm was a model of neatness, order, and thrift, with its scores of Devonshire kine and hundreds of Merino sheep; and the late Lord MORPETH, after spending a day at Elm Cottage, declared it to have been one of the pleasantest

of his life. He could hardly realize that his venerable entertainer had ploughed the wild seas over forty years, before he ever dreamed of ploughing his own broad acres, much less of reaching the front rank of Berkshire farmers. Like most of his countrymen, he had the true Yankee tact of turning his hand to any thing worthy of earnest effort, and the will to do thoroughly whatever he undertook. All his leisure hours were devoted to reading, and few men of so active and laborious a life ever acquired a larger fund of general information. Modest and unassuming in his manners; frank, courteous, hospitable; above all fear but that of doing wrong; with a heart tender as woman's to every manifestation of suffering—he was loved and honored by all, as a noble specimen of that heroic race, to whose courage, fortitude, and inflexible resolution we are indebted for our heritage of liberty.

The cruel treatment experienced as a prisoner had implanted in his bosom an irrepressible abhorrence of tyranny in every form. Not long after his release from captivity, while returning from an excursion to Fisher's Island, his attention was attracted to a suspicious vessel, anchored at an unusual place in the eastern bay of Stonington. He ran down to her, and, on going on board, found six negroes in charge of a single guardian, whose villanous comrades had gone ashore for supplies. On questioning the poor fellows, he learned that they had been kidnapped near Newport, and were bound for a Southern market. He told them they should be free, if they would stand by him like men. This they did with a will; the white ruffian was seized, bound, and thrust under hatches; and his dusky wards, leaping into the boat alongside, were soon beyond the reach of the baffled kidnappers. It would not be strange if this paternal example of practical abolition in the last century, has not been lost on his children in these later and darker years of African oppression. Accustomed to command almost from his boyhood, and never exacting any thing unjust or unreasonable, my father expected and received unquestioning obedience in his household of ten children—three sons and seven daughters. Such was our training, both by precept and example, that not one of us but would have encountered the frowns of a whole community sooner than his single displeasure. We could not bear the thought that *he* should ever have cause to be ashamed of us. We early learned that to preserve his favor and that of our dear mother,

we must be truthful, honorable in word and deed, respectful of the rights and feelings of others, and unaffectedly averse to the least dalliance with impiety or irreverence.

In stature, my father was a little over six feet, erect, robust, and of rare physical power and endurance. His hands and feet were remarkably small; his features regular; his forehead high and fair; his hair very black, and one tangle of luxuriant curls; his eyes were of a clear hazel; his *teeth all double*, and all sound and strong at his decease, in 1844, in his seventy-ninth year. On his plain monument, in the beautiful cemetery at Stockbridge, where he sleeps by the beloved partner of his earthly pilgrimage, his children have inscribed the following memorial of their affection:—

“ Father, thy loss hath taught us this dear lore,
 “ That not to breathe is not to be no more;
 “ Ah no; to one whose days, like thine, were passed
 “ In self-denying kindness to the last,
 “ Remains, unfading with the final breath,
 “ A green and sweet vitality in death!”

In the hope that this imperfect sketch of one of the latest survivors of the *Jersey* Prison-ship, may add somewhat of interest to the volume which is to commemorate the long and bitter sufferings of its heroic victims, I remain,

My dear Sir,

Most truly yours,

W. P. PALMER.

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[INCLOSURES.]

I. MEMORANDA, CONCERNING HIS OWN EXPERIENCE ON BOARD OF THE
JERSEY PRISON-SHIP, BY ROSWELL PALMER, ESQ., OF STOCKBRIDGE,
 MASSACHUSETTS.

I was taken prisoner on board the Privateer *Pilgrim*, of Stonington, a sixteen-gun brig, HUMPHREY CRARY, Captain, by two British vessels called the *Belisarius* and *Quebec*, and carried into Holmes' Hole, where

we lay seven weeks. We were treated well there. The *Belisarius*, built in Salem, had been captured by the English. She was a fast sailer, and the British officers used to bet on her and the *Amphitrite* (English built), which used to go out for a race about fifteen miles by Gay Head. The *Belisarius* always beat her competitor, and the Americans of course exulted in the triumph of the Yankee vessel.

During our imprisonment at the Wallabout, there was a battle off Sandy Hook between a British and French frigate. The latter was taken, after an action in which over one hundred were killed and wounded, and the balance of her crew (some four or five hundred) were transferred as prisoners to the orlop deck of the *Old Jersey*. They were much better treated than we Americans on the deck above them. All, however, suffered very much for the want of water, crowding round two half hogsheads when brought on board, and often fighting for the first drink. On one of these occasions, a Virginian near me was elbowed by a Spaniard, and thrust him back. The Spaniard drew a sheath-knife, when the Virginian knocked him headlong, backwards, down two hatches, which had just been opened for heaving up a hogshead of stale water from the hold, for the prisoners' drink. This water had probably been there for years, and was as ropy as molasses!

There was a deal of trouble between the American and the French and Spanish prisoners. The latter slept in hammocks, *we* on the *floor* of the deck next above them. One night, our boys went down, still, and, at a given signal, cut the hammock lashings of the French and Spanish prisoners at the head, and let them all down by the run on the deck floor. In the midst of the row that followed this deed of darkness, the Americans stole back to their quarters, and were all fast *asleep* when the English guard came down.

No lights were permitted after ten o'clock. We used, however, to hide our candles occasionally under our hats, when the order came to "*Douse the glim!*" One night the officer of the guard discovered our disobedience, and came storming down the broad hatchway with a file of men. Our lights were all extinguished in a moment, and we on the alert for our tyrants, whom we seized with a will, and hustled to and fro in the darkness, till their cries aroused the whole ship!

2. MEMORANDA, CONCERNING HIS UNCLE'S IMPRISONMENT ON BOARD OF THE *SCORPION* AND *JERSEY* PRISON-SHIPS, BY ROSWELL PALMER, ESQ.

Lieutenant ELIAKIM PALMER, THOMAS HITCHCOCK, and JOHN SEARLES were Stonington prisoners on board the *Scorpion*, a British seventy-four, anchored off the Battery, New York.

Having concerted a plan to escape before being transferred to the *Old Jersey*, Hitchcock went into the chains, and dropped his hat into the water. On his return, he begged for a boat to recover it, and being earnestly seconded by Lieutenant PALMER, the officer of the deck finally consented, ordering a guard to accompany the "Damned rebels." They were a long time in getting the boat off, the hat meanwhile floating away from the ship. They rowed very awkwardly, of course, got jeered at uproariously for "Yankee land-lubbers," and were presently ordered to return. Being then nearly out of musket-range, Lieutenant PALMER suddenly seized and disarmed the astonished guard, while his comrades were not slow in manifesting their latent adroitness in the use of the oar to their no less astonished deriders. In a moment the Bay was alive with excitement; many shots, big and little, were fired at the audacious fugitives; from all the fleet, boats put off in hot pursuit; but the Stonington boys reached the Jersey shore in safety, and escaped with their prisoners to WASHINGTON'S Head-Quarters, where their tact and bravery received the personal commendation of the great Chief.

Lieutenant ELIAKIM PALMER,* a prisoner on board the *Old Jersey*, escaped a second time, by cutting away three iron bars let into a square aperture in the side of the ship on the orlop-deck, formerly a part of her hold. He swam ashore with his shirt and trousers tied to his head. Having lost the latter, he was obliged to make his way down Long Island, for nearly its whole length, in his shirt only. He hid in ditches during the day, subsisting on berries and the bounty of cows, milked directly into his mouth! He crawled by the sentries stationed at the narrow parts of the Island, and at length, after many days, reached Oyster Pond Point, whence he was taken by friends to his home in Stonington.

* ELIAKIM PALMER was my father's uncle.—W. P. P.

VI.

THE DESTRUCTIVE OPERATION OF FOUL AIR, TAINTED PROVISIONS, BAD WATER, AND PERSONAL FILTHINESS, UPON HUMAN CONSTITUTIONS;

Exemplified in the unparalleled Cruelty of the British to the American Captives at New York during the Revolutionary War, on Board their Prison and Hospital Ships. By Captain ALEXANDER COFFIN, Jun., one of the surviving Sufferers: In a Communication to Dr. MITCHILL, dated September 4, 1807.

I SHALL furnish you with an account of the treatment that I, with other of my fellow-citizens, received on board the *Jersey* and *John* Prison-ships, those monuments of British barbarity and infamy. I shall give you nothing but a plain, simple statement of facts that cannot be controverted. And I begin my narrative from the time of my leaving the *South Carolina* frigate.

In June, 1782, I left the above-mentioned frigate in the Havana, on board of which ship I had long served as a midshipman, and made several trading voyages. I sailed, early in September, from Baltimore for the Havana, in a fleet of about forty sail, most of which were captured, and we among the rest, by the British frigate *Ceres*, Captain HAWKINS, a man in every sense of the word a perfect brute.

Although our commander, Captain HUGHES, was a very gentlemanly man, he was treated in the most shameful and abusive manner by said HAWKINS, and ordered below to mess with the petty officers. Our officers were put in the cable-tier with the crew, and a guard placed at the hatchway to prevent more than two going on deck at a time, and that only for the necessary calls of nature. The provisions served out to us were of the very worst kind, and very short allowance even of that. They frequently gave us pea-soup, that is, pea-water, for the pease and the soup, all but about a gallon or two, were taken out for the ship's company, and the coppers filled up with water, and just warmed and stirred together, and brought down to us in a strap-tub.

And, Sir, I might have defied any person on earth, possessing the most acute olfactory powers, and the most refined taste, to decide, either by one or the other, or both of those senses, whether it was pease and water, slush and water, or swill.

After living and being treated in this way, subject to every insult and abuse, for ten or twelve days, we fell in with the *Champion* British twenty-gun ship, which was bound to New York to refit, and were all sent on board of her. The Captain was a true seaman and a gentleman; and our treatment was so different from what we had experienced on board the *Ceres*, that it was like being removed from Purgatory to Paradise. His name, I think, was EDWARDS.

We arrived about the beginning of October at New York, and were immediately sent on board the Prison-ship in a small schooner called, ironically enough, the *Relief*, commanded by one GARDNER, an Irishman.

This schooner *Relief* plied between the Prison-ship and New York, and carried the water and provisions from the city to the ship. In fact, the said schooner might emphatically be termed the *Relief*, for the execrable water and provisions she carried *relieved* many of my brave but unfortunate countrymen, *by death*, from the misery and savage treatment they daily endured.

Before I go on to relate the treatment we experienced on board the *Jersey*, I will make one remark, and that is, that if you were to rake the infernal regions, I doubt whether you could find such another set of demons as the officers and men who had charge of the *Old Jersey* Prison-ship. And, Sir, I shall not be surprised if you, possessing those finer feelings which I believe are interwoven in the composition of man, and which are not totally torn from the *piece*, till, by a long and obstinate perseverance in the meanest, the basest, and cruellest of all human arts, a man becomes lost to every sense of honor, of justice, of humanity, and common honesty;—I shall not be surprised, I say, if you, possessing those finer feelings, should doubt whether men could be so lost to their sacred obligations to their God, and the moral ties which ought to bind them to their duty toward their fellow-men, as those men were, who had the charge, and also those who had any agency in the affairs of the *Jersey* Prison-ship.

On my arrival on board the *Old Jersey*, I found there about eleven

hundred prisoners; many of them had been there from three to six months, but few lived over that time if they did not get away by some means or other. They were generally in the most deplorable situation, mere walking skeletons, without money, and scarcely clothes to cover their nakedness, and overrun with lice from head to foot. The provisions, Sir, that were served out to us was not more than four or five ounces of meat, and about as much bread, all condemned provisions from their ships-of-war, which no doubt were supplied with new in their stead, and the new, in all probability, charged by the Commissaries to the *Jersey*. They, however, know best about that; and however secure they may now feel, they will have to render an account of that business to a Judge who cannot be deceived. This fact, however, I can safely aver, that both the times that I was confined on board the Prison-ship, there never were provisions served out to the prisoners that would have been eatable by men that were not literally in a starving situation. The water that we were forced to use was carried from this city; and I positively assert, that I never, after having followed the sea thirty years, had on board of any ship (and I have been three years on some of my voyages) water so bad as that we were obliged to use on board the *Old Jersey*; when there was, as it were to tantalize us, as fine water, not more than three cables length from us, at the mill in the Wallabout, as was perhaps ever drank. There were hogs kept in pens on the Gun-deck by the officers of the Prison-ship for their own use; and I have seen the prisoners watch an opportunity, and with a tin pot steal the bran from the hogs' trough, and go into the Galley, and when they could get an opportunity, boil it on the fire, and eat it as you, Sir, would eat of good soup when hungry. This I have seen more than once, and there are those now living beside me who can bear testimony to the same fact. There are many other facts equally abominable that I could mention, but the very thought of those things brings to my recollection scenes the most distressing.

When I reflect how many hundreds of my brave and intrepid brother-seamen and countrymen I have seen, in all the bloom of health, brought on board of that ship, and in a few days numbered with the dead, in consequence of the savage treatment they there received, I can but adore my Creator that He suffered me to escape; but I did not escape, Sir, without being brought to the very verge of the grave.

This was the second time I was on board, which I shall mention more particularly hereafter. Those of us who had money fared much better than those who had none. I had made out to save, when taken, about twenty dollars, and with that I could buy from the bumboats, that were permitted to come alongside, bread, fruit, &c. ; but, Sir, those bumboatmen were of the same kidney with the officers of the *Jersey* ; we got nothing from them without paying through the nose for it, and I soon found the bottom of my purse ; after which I fared no better than the rest. I was, however, fortunate in another respect ; for after having been there about six weeks, two of my countrymen (I am a Nantucket man) happened to come to New York to endeavor to recover a whaling sloop that had been captured, with a whaling license from Admiral DIGBY ; and they found means to procure my release, passing me for a Quaker, to which I confess I had no pretensions further than my mother being a member of that respectable society. Thus, Sir, I returned to my friends fit for the newest fashion, after an absence of three years.

For my whole wardrobe I carried on my back, which consisted of a jacket, shirt, and trousers, a pair of old shoes, and a handkerchief which served me for a hat, and had more than two months, for I lost my hat the day we were taken, from the main top-gallant yard, furling the top-gallant sail. My clothes, I forgot to mention, were completely laced with locomotive tinsel, and moved, as if by instinct, in all directions ; but as my mother was not fond of such company, she furnished me with a suit of my father's, who was absent at sea, and condemned my laced suit for the benefit of all concerned.

Being then in the prime of youth, about eighteen years of age, and naturally of a roving disposition, I could not bear the idea of being idle at home. I therefore proceeded to Providence, Rhode Island, and shipping on board the brig *Betsy and Polly*, Captain ROBERT FOLGER, bound for Virginia and Amsterdam, we sailed from Newport early in February, 1783 ; and were taken five days after, off the Capes of Virginia, by the *Fair American* privateer, of this port, mounting sixteen sixes, and having eighty-five men, commanded by one BURTON, a refugee, most of whose officers were of the same stamp. We were immediately handcuffed two and two, and ordered into the hold in the cable-tier. Having been plundered of our beds and bedding, the soft-

est bed we had was the soft side of a water-cask and the coils of a cable.

The *Fair American*, having been handsomely dressed by an United States vessel of one-half of her force, was obliged to put into New York, then in possession of the British army, to refit; and we arrived within the Hook about the beginning of March, and were put on board a pilot-boat and brought up to this city. The boat hauled alongside of the Crane-wharf, where we had our irons knocked off, *the marks of which I carry to this day*; and were put on board the same schooner *Relief* mentioned in a former part of this narrative, and sent up once more to the Prison-ship.

It was just three months from my leaving the *Old Jersey* to my being again a prisoner on board of her; and on my return I found but very few of those whom I had left three months before; some had made their escape; some had been exchanged; but the greater part had taken up their abode under the surface of that hill which you can see from your windows, where their bones are mouldering to dust, and mingling with mother earth; a lesson to Americans, written *in capitals, on British cruelty and injustice*. I found, on my return on board the *Jersey*, more prisoners than when I left her; and she being so crowded, they were obliged to send about two hundred of us on board the *John*, a transport-ship of about three hundred tons. There we were treated worse, if possible, than on board the *Jersey*; and our accommodations were infinitely worse, for the *Jersey*, being an old condemned sixty-four gun ship, had two tier of ports fore and aft, air-ports, and large hatchways, which gave a pretty free circulation of air through the ship; whereas the *John* being a merchant ship, and with small hatchways, and no ports, and the hatches laid down every night, and no man allowed during the night to go on deck, all exonerations were of course made below; the effluvia arising from these, together with the already contaminated air, occasioned by the breath of so many people so pent up together, was enough to destroy men of the most healthy and robust constitutions. All the time I was on board this ship not a prisoner ate his allowance, bad as it was, cooked, more than three or four times; but ate it raw as it came out of the barrel. These, Sir, are stubborn facts that cannot be controverted.

In the middle of this ship, between decks, was raised a platform of

boards about two and a half feet high, for those prisoners to sleep on who had no hammocks. On this they used frequently to sit and play at cards, to pass the time. One night in particular, several of us sat to see them play till about ten o'clock, and then retired to our hammocks, and left them playing; about one A. M. we were called, and told that one Bird was dying; we turned out and went to where he lay, and found him just expiring. Thus, at ten P. M. this young man was apparently as well as any of us, and at one A. M. had paid the debt to nature. Many others went off in the same way. It will perhaps be said that men may die suddenly anywhere. True; but do they die suddenly anywhere from the same cause?

After all these things, it is, I think, impossible for the mind to form any other conclusion than that there was a premeditated design to destroy as many Americans as they could on board of their Prison-ships; the treatment of the prisoners warrants the conclusion; but it is mean, base, and cowardly, to endeavor to conquer an enemy by such infamous means, and truly characteristic of base and cowardly wretches. The truly brave will always treat their prisoners well. There were two or three Hospital-ships near the Prison-ships; and so soon as any of the prisoners complained of being sick, they were sent on board of one of them; and I verily believe that not one out of a hundred ever returned or recovered. I am sure I never knew but one to recover. Almost (and in fact I believe I may safely say) every morning a large boat from each of the hospital-ships went loaded with dead bodies, which were all tumbled together into a hole dug for the purpose, on the hill where the national navy-yard now is.

A singular affair happened on board of one of those Hospital-ships, and no less true than singular. All the prisoners that died after the boat with the load had gone ashore, were sewed up in hammocks, and left on deck till the next morning. As usual, a great number had thus been disposed of. In the morning, while employed in loading the boat, one of the seamen perceived motion in one of the hammocks, just as they were about launching it down the board placed for that purpose from the gunwale of the ship into the boat, and exclaimed, "D—n my eyes, that fellow is not dead;" and, if I have been rightly informed, and I believe I have, there was quite a dispute between this man and the others about it. They swore he was dead enough, and

should go into the boat; he swore he should not be launched, as they termed it, and took his knife and ripped open the hammock, and behold! the man was really alive. There had been a heavy rain during the night, and as the vital functions had not totally ceased, but were merely suspended in consequence of the main-spring being out of order, this seasonable moistening must have given tone and elasticity to the great spring, which must have communicated to the lesser ones, and put the whole machinery again in motion. You know better about these things than I do, and can better judge of the cause of the reanimation of this man from the circumstances mentioned. He was a native of Rhode Island; his name was GAVOR. He went to Rhode Island in the same flag of truce with me, about a month afterwards. I felt extremely ill, but made out to keep about till I got home (my parents then lived on the island of Nantucket); was then taken down, and lay in my bed six weeks in the most deplorable situation; my body was swelled to a great degree, and my legs were as big round as my body now is, and affected with the most excruciating pains. What my disorder was I will not pretend to say; but Dr. TUPPER, quite an eminent physician, and a noted tory, who attended me, declared to my mother that he knew of nothing that would operate in the manner that my disorder did, but poison. For the truth of this I refer to my father and brothers, and to Mr. HENRY COFFIN, father to Captain PETER COFFIN, of the *Manchester Packet*, of this port.

Thus, Sir, in some haste, without much attention to order or diction, I have given you part of the history of my life and sufferings; but I endeavored to bear them as became an American. And I must mention, before I close, to the everlasting honor of those unfortunate Americans who were on board the *Jersey* Prison-ship, that notwithstanding the savage treatment they received, and death staring them in the face, every attempt (which was very frequent) that the British made to persuade them to enter on board their ships-of-war or in their army, was treated with the utmost contempt; and I never knew, while I was on board, but one instance of defection, and that person was hooted at and abused by the prisoners till the boat was out of hearing. The patriotism in preferring such treatment, and even death in its most frightful shapes, to the serving the British, and fighting against their own country, has seldom been equalled, certainly never excelled. And

if there be no monument raised with hands to commemorate the virtue of those men, it is stamped in capitals on the heart of every American acquainted with their merit and sufferings, and will there remain so long as the blood flows from its fountain.

VII.

RECOLLECTIONS OF BROOKLYN AND NEW YORK, IN 1776.

[From a Note-book of General JEREMIAH JOHNSON, of the *Wale* bogt, L. I.]

THE subject of the naval prisoners, and of the British Prison-ships stationed at the Wallabout, during the Revolution, is one which cannot be passed by in silence.

From printed journals, published at New York at the close of the war, it appeared that eleven thousand five hundred American prisoners had died on board the Prison-ships. Although this number is very great, still, if the number who perished had been less, the Commissary of Naval prisoners, DAVID SPROAT, Esq., and his Deputy, had it in their power, by an official Return, to give the true number taken, exchanged, escaped, and *dead*. Such a Return has never appeared in the United States.

DAVID SPROAT returned to America after the war, and resided in Philadelphia, where he died. The Commissary could not have been ignorant of the statement published here on this interesting subject. We may, therefore, infer that about that number—eleven thousand five hundred—perished in the Prison-ships.

A large transport, named the *Whitby*, was the first Prison-ship anchored in the Wallabout. She was moored near “Remsen’s mill,” about the twentieth of October, 1776, and was then crowded with prisoners. Many landsmen were prisoners on board this vessel: she was said to be the most sickly of *all* the Prison-ships. Bad provisions, bad water, and scanty rations, were dealt to the prisoners. No medical men attended the sick. Disease reigned unrelieved, and hundreds

died from pestilence, or were starved, on board this floating Prison. I saw the sand-beach, between a ravine in the hill and Mr. Remsen's dock, become filled with graves in the course of two months; and before the first of May, 1777, the ravine alluded to was itself occupied in the same way.

In the month of May, 1777, two large ships were anchored in the Wallabout, when the prisoners were transferred from the *Whitby* to them: these vessels were also very sickly, from the causes before stated. Although many prisoners were sent on board of them, and none exchanged, *death* made room for all.

On a Sunday afternoon, about the middle of October, 1777, one of the Prison-ships was burnt: the prisoners, except a few, who, it was said, were burnt in the vessel, were removed to the remaining ship. It was reported, at the time, that the prisoners had fired their Prison, which, if true, proves that they preferred death, even by fire, to the lingering sufferings of pestilence and starvation.

In the month of February, 1778, the remaining Prison-ship was burnt at night, when the prisoners were removed from her to the ships then wintering in the Wallabout.

In the month of April, 1778, the *Old Jersey* was moored in the Wallabout, and all the prisoners (except the sick) were transferred to her. The sick were carried to two Hospital-ships, named the *Hope* and *Falmouth*, anchored near each other, about two hundred yards east from the *Jersey*. These ships remained in the Wallabout until New York was evacuated by the British. The *Jersey* was the Receiving-ship; the others, truly, the ships of Death!

It has been generally thought that all the prisoners died on board of the *Jersey*. This is not true: many may have died on board of her, who were not reported as sick; but all the men who were placed on the sick-list were removed to the Hospital-ships, from which they were usually taken, sewed up in a blanket, to their *long home*.

After the Hospital-ships were brought into the Wallabout it was reported that the sick were attended by Physicians;¹ few, very few, however, recovered. It was no uncommon thing to see five or six dead bodies brought on shore in a single morning, when a small exca-

¹ We knew a young physician, HARRY VANDEWATER, who attended the ships, who took the fever on board, and died.

vation would be dug at the foot of the hill, the bodies be cast in, and a man with a shovel would cover them, by shovelling sand down the hill upon them. Many were buried in a ravine of the hill; some on the farm. The whole shore, from Rennie's Point to Mr. REMSEN's door-yard, was a place of graves; as were also the slope of the hill,¹ near the house; the shore, from Mr. REMSEN's barn along the mill-pond to Rappelye's farm; and the sandy island, between the flood-gates and the mill-dam; while a few were buried on the shore on the east side of the Wallabout. Thus did *Death* reign *here*, from 1776 until the peace. The whole Wallabout was a sickly place during the war. The atmosphere seemed to be charged with foul air from the Prison-ships, and with the effluvia of the dead bodies, washed out of their graves by the tides.

We believe that more than half of the dead, buried on the outer side of the mill-pond, were washed out by the waves at high tide, during northeasterly winds. The bones of the dead lay exposed along the beach, drying and bleaching in the sun, and whitening the shore; till reached by the power of a succeeding storm, as the agitated waters receded, the bones receded with them into the deep—where they remain, unseen by man, awaiting the resurrection morn, when, again joined to the spirits to which they belong, they will meet their persecuting murderers at the bar of the supreme Judge of “the quick and “the dead.”

We have, ourselves, examined many of the *skulls* lying on the shore. From the teeth, they appeared to be the remains of men in the prime of life.

The prisoners confined in the *Jersey* had secretly obtained a *crow-bar*, which was kept concealed, in the berth of some confidential officer, among the prisoners. The bar was used to break off the *port* gratings. This was done, in windy nights, when good swimmers were ready to leave the ship for the land. In this way a number escaped.

Captain DOUGHERTY, a friend of the writer, had charge of the bar when he was a prisoner on board of the *Jersey*, and effected his escape by its means. When he left the ship he gave the bar to a confidant, to be used for the relief of others. Very few who left the ship were

¹ This part of the hill was dug away by Mr. JACKSON, where he obtained the bones for the “*Dry-bone procession*.”

retaken: they knew where to find friends to conceal them, and to help them beyond pursuit.

A singularly daring and successful escape was effected from the *Jersey*, about four o'clock one afternoon, in the beginning of December, 1780. The best boat of the ship had returned from New York, between three and four o'clock, and was left fastened at the gangway, with her oars on board. The afternoon was stormy, the wind blew from the northeast, and the tide ran flood. A watchword was given, and a number of prisoners placed themselves, carelessly, between the ship's waist and the sentinel. At this juncture four eastern Captains got on board the boat, which was cast off by their friends. The boat passed close under the bows of the ship, and was a considerable distance from her before the sentinel on the forecastle gave the alarm, and fired at her. The second boat was manned for a chase; she pursued in vain; one man from her bow fired several shots at the boat, and a few guns were fired at her from the Bushwick shore; but all to no effect—the boat passed Hell-gate in the evening, and arrived safe in Connecticut next morning.

A spring of the water was a favorite watering-place for the British shipping. The water-boat of the *Jersey* watered from the spring, daily, when it could be done: four prisoners were usually brought on shore to fill the casks, attended by a guard. The prisoners were frequently permitted to come to the house to get milk and food; and often brought letters privately from the ship. By these the sufferings on board were revealed.

Supplies of vegetables were frequently collected, by Mr. REMSEN (the beneyolent owner of the mill), for the prisoners; and small sums of money were sent on board by the writer's father to his friends, by means of these watering parties.

We have arrived at a point at which we deem it proper to prove to the reader that what we have stated, on the subject of the cruel treatment of the American prisoners, is true. In doing it we will refer to British authority to support our statement.

The *British Annual Register*, of 1781, quotes a report of a Committee of Congress, in relation to the treatment of American prisoners. The Committee report as follows, viz.: "That, notwithstanding every effort of Congress to obtain for our people, prisoners in the hands of

“the enemy, that treatment which humanity alone should have dictated, the British commander, unmindful of the tenderness exercised towards their men, prisoners in our hands, and regardless of the practice of civilized nations, has persisted in treating our people, prisoners to them, with every species of *insult, outrage, and cruelty*. Officers and men are, indiscriminately, thrown into the *holds of Prison-ships*, and into loathsome dungeons, and there deprived of fuel and the common necessities of life; by which means, many of the citizens of these States have been compelled to enter into their service, to avoid those distresses which a conduct so contrary to the Law of Nations had brought upon them. Our seamen, taken upon the American coasts, have been sent to Great Britain, or other parts beyond the seas, to prevent their being exchanged, or to force them to take arms against their country. In the opinion of the Committee, an exercise of the law of retaliation has therefore become necessary, as a justice due to those citizens of America, whom the fortune of war has thrown into the hands of the enemy.”

This, an American report, is supported as follows:—

We quote from the same *Register*, page 152: “A petition was presented to the House the same day (20th June) by Mr. Fox, from the American prisoners in Mill-prison, Plymouth; setting forth that they were treated with less humanity than the French and Spaniards, though, by reason that they had no Agent established in this country for their protection, they were entitled to expect a larger share of indulgence than others; they had not a sufficient allowance of *bread*, and were very scantily furnished with clothing.

“A similar petition was presented to the House of Peers by the Duke of Richmond; and these petitions occasioned considerable debates in both Houses. Several motions were grounded on these petitions, but those proposed by the Lords and Gentlemen in the opposition, were determined in the negative, and others, to *exculpate* the Government in this business, were resolved in the affirmative. It appeared, upon inquiry, that the American prisoners were allowed *half* a pound of bread *less* per day than the French and Spanish prisoners. But the petitions of the Americans produced no alterations in their favor, and the conduct of the administration was equally impolitic and illiberal. The additional allowance, which

“ was solicited on behalf of the prisoners, could be no object either to
 “ Government or to the Nation ; and it was certainly unwise, by treat-
 “ ing American prisoners worse than those of France and Spain, to
 “ increase the fatal animosity which had unhappily taken place be-
 “ tween the mother country and the Colonies, and this, too, at a period
 “ when the subjugation of the latter had become so hopeless.”

We trust that our proof is sufficient. We have shown that in England, under the eyes, and in the keeping, and with the knowledge of the British ministry, Americans were confined, and kept upon half allowance of bread ; and if this was the case in Britain, there can be no doubt that the Commissary at New York obeyed orders, in thus treating the prisoners here.

VIII.

THE PRIVATEER SLOOP *CHANCE*, OF PROVIDENCE.

THE *Chance*, of Providence, a fine new sloop, mounting twelve six-pounders, and manned with sixty-five men, was fitted out by Messrs. CLARKE & NIGHTINGALE, one of the leading commercial houses in that city.

She sailed from that port early in May, 1782, as related in the text of this volume ; and soon after, she was captured and sent into New York by his Majesty's ship *Belisarius*, commanded by Captain RICHARD GRAVES.¹

Her crew, as has been shown by Captain DRING, in the preceding pages of this volume, was consigned to the tender mercies of DAVID SPROAT and the commander of the *Jersey* Prison-ship. The vessel, a few days after her arrival in New York, was probably condemned by

¹ The following, from the official paper of the day, will illustrate this subject:—

[From *The Royal Gazette*, No. 588, New-York, Saturday, May 18, 1782.]

“ The following Prizes have been sent into this port since our last.

* * * * *

“ The Rebel privateer Sloop *Chance*, of twelve guns and sixty men, from Providence
 “ (Rhode-Island) by his Majesty's Ship *Bellisarius*, Thomas Graves, Esq : Commander.”

the Court of Vice-Admiralty, and sold at auction under the direction of the Marshal of the District; and thenceforth the *Chance* was lost to history.

The following official notice, from the Government paper of the day, closes the sad story :—

[From *The Royal Gazette*, No. 603, New-York, Wednesday, July 10, 1782.]

New-York, July 10, 1782

“NOTICE is hereby given to the Officers & Company of his Majesty’s Ship *Bellisarius*, Richard Graves, Esq; commander, “who were actually on board on the 12th, 15th, and 18th of May “1782, at the captures of the privateer Sloop *Chance*, Schooner *Swordfish*, and privateer Brig *Sampson*; that they will be paid their “respective shares of the said captures on Saturday the 13th instant “at the office of the subscriber, and the shares not then demanded “will be recalled every day (Sundays excepted) for three years to “come, when the unclaimed shares will be paid into Greenwich “Hospital agreeable to Act of Parliament.

“SAMUEL KEMBLE, Agent.”

IX.

THE *BELISARIUS*, CAPTAIN RICHARD GRAVES.

This vessel was a fine frigate-built ship, belonging formerly to Boston, from which port she sailed, under the command of Captain MUXRO, on Sunday, the sixth of May, 1781, on her first cruise.¹

She originally mounted twenty nine-pounders, and carried a crew of upwards of one hundred and sixty men. She was one of the most elegant vessels of her day; and her speed was superior to that of most of the vessels then afloat.²

She was captured while on her first cruise,³ by His Majesty’s frigates *Amphitrite* and *Medea*, assisted by the privateer *Virginia*, and carried

¹ MS. Diary of WILLIAM DROWNE, her Captain’s Clerk.

² Ibid.; MS. Memo. of ROSWELL PALMER, Esq., *ante*.

³ Diary of WILLIAM DROWNE, *ante*.

into New York, where she arrived on Sunday, the twelfth of August, 1781.¹ She was taken into the service as soon after her arrival as the requisite forms of law could be complied with,² and, under the command of Captain RICHARD GRAVES, she committed great havoc among the American shipping, against which she was especially employed.

¹ The following notices of her arrival at the port of New York will illustrate this subject:—

[From *The Royal Gazette*, No. 509, New York, Wednesday, August 15, 1781.]

“Last Sunday arrived the rebel ship *Bellisarius*, of 24 nine pounders and one hundred and fifty men, prize to the *Medea* and *Amphitrite* frigates; she is a very fine vessel.”

[From *The Royal Gazette*, No. 511, New York, Wednesday, August 22, 1781.]

“*The following is an accurate list of the prizes brought into this port, since Saturday the 11th inst. by several of his Majesty's ships, and sundry privateers.*

* * * * * * * *

“The *Bellisarius*, of 24 guns, Captain Munro, from Salem, by his Majesty's frigates the *Amphitrite*, *Medea*, and *Virginia* privateer, belonging to Messrs. Shedden and Goodrich.”

² *The Gentleman's and Citizen's Almanack* for 1786, published in Dublin, contains a list of the captains in the Royal Navy, at that date, from which it appears that Captain RICHARD GRAVES received his commission on the twenty-ninth of August, 1781; and the following card, from the official paper of the same date, will throw additional light on the subject:—

[From *The Royal Gazette*, No. 513, New York, Wednesday, August 29, 1781.]

“All Gentlemen Volunteers,

“WHETHER ABLE OR ORDINARY,

“WHO are willing to serve their King and Country, and enrich themselves with the Treasure of their Enemies, on Board

“HIS MAJESTY'S SHIP,

“BELISARIUS,

“One of the most elegant and perfectly well appointed Frigates of her size in the universe, carrying 24 Six and Nine Pounders, commanded by

“RICHARD GRAVES, ESQUIRE;

“Are desired to repair on Board the said Ship, at the KING'S YARD: where every able Seaman will receive a Bounty of Three Pounds; and every ordinary Seaman, or able bodied Landsman, Forty Shillings, be entered into present Pay, and receive the most generous Encouragement.

“The Ship is fitting out with all expedition.

“GOD SAVE THE KING.”

X.

THE PRISON-SHIP *JERSEY*.

This vessel, so well known and yet so much despised, was a fourth-rate ship of the line, mounting sixty guns, and carrying a crew of four hundred men.

She was built in 1736—having succeeded to the name of a celebrated fifty-gun ship which was then withdrawn from the service—and in the following year [1737] she was fitted for sea as one of the Channel fleet, commanded by Sir JOHN NORRIS.

In the fall of 1738, the command of the *Jersey* was given to Captain EDMUND WILLIAMS; and in July, 1739, she was one of the vessels which were sent to the Mediterranean Sea, under Rear-Admiral CHALONER OGLE, when a threatened rupture with Spain rendered it necessary to strengthen the naval force on that station, then commanded by Rear-Admiral NICHOLAS HADDOCK.

The trouble in the Mediterranean having been quieted by the appearance of so heavy a force, in 1740, the *Jersey* returned home; but she was again sent out, under the command of Captain PETER LAWRENCE, and was one of the vessels forming the fleet under Sir JOHN NORRIS, when, in the fall of that year and in the spring of 1741, that gentleman made his fruitless demonstrations against the Spanish coast.

Soon afterward [1741] the *Jersey*, still forming one of the fleet commanded by Sir CHALONER OGLE, was sent to the West Indies, to strengthen the forces on that station, commanded by Vice-Admiral VERNON; and she was with that distinguished officer when he made his well-known unsuccessful attack on Carthage, and the Spanish dominions in America, in that year.

In March, 1743, Captain LAWRENCE was succeeded in the command of the *Jersey* by Captain HARRY NORRIS, youngest son of Admiral Sir JOHN NORRIS; and the *Jersey* formed one of the fleet commanded by that distinguished officer, which was designed to watch the enemy's

Brest fleet; but having suffered severely from a storm while on that station, she was obliged to return to the Downs.

Captain HARRY NORRIS having been promoted to a heavier ship, the command of the *Jersey*, soon afterward, was given to Captain CHARLES HARDY, subsequently well known as Governor of the Colony of New York; and in June, 1744, that gallant officer having been appointed to the command of the Newfoundland station, and Governor of the Colony, she sailed for North America, and bore his flag in those waters during the remainder of the year.

In 1745, still under the immediate command of Captain HARDY, the *Jersey* was one of the ships which, under Vice-Admiral MEDLEY, were sent to the Mediterranean, where Vice-Admiral Sir WILLIAM ROWLEY then commanded; and as she continued on that station during the following year, under the command of Vice-Admiral MEDLEY, there is little doubt that Captain HARDY remained there, during the remainder of his term of service on that vessel.

It was while under the command of Captain HARDY, in July, 1745, the *Jersey* was engaged with the French ship *St. Esprit*, of seventy-four guns, in one of the most desperate engagements on record. The action continued during two hours and a half, when the *St. Esprit* was compelled to bear away for Cadiz, where she was repaired and refitted for sea.

At the close of Sir CHARLES HARDY's term of service, in 1747, the *Jersey* was laid up, evidently unfit for active service; and in October, 1748, she was reported among the "Hulks" in port.

On the renewal of hostilities with France, in 1756, the *Jersey* was refitted for service, and the command given to Captain JOHN BARKER; and in May, 1757, she was sent to the Mediterranean, where, under the orders of Admiral HENRY OSBORNE, she continued upward of two years, having been present, on the twenty-eighth of February, 1758, when M. DU QUESNE made his ineffectual attempt to re-enforce M. DE LA CLUE, who was then closely confined, with the fleet under his command, in the harbor of Carthagen.

On the eighteenth of August, 1759, while commanded by Captain BARKER, the *Jersey*, with the *Culloden* and *Conqueror*, were ordered by Admiral BOSCOWAN, the commander of the fleet, to proceed to the mouth of the harbor of Toulon, for the purpose of cutting out or

destroying two French ships which were moored there, under cover of the batteries, with the hope of forcing the French Admiral, DE LA CLUE, to an engagement.

The three ships approached the harbor, as directed, with great firmness; but they were assailed by so heavy a fire, not only from the enemy's ships and fortifications, but from several masked batteries, that, after an unequal but desperate contest of upwards of three hours, they were compelled to retire without having succeeded in their object, and to repair to Gibraltar to be refitted.

In the course of that year [1759] Captain BARKER was succeeded in the command of the *Jersey* by Captain ANDREW WILKINSON, under whom, forming one of the Mediterranean fleet, commanded by Vice-Admiral Sir CHARLES SAUNDERS, she continued in active service during the years 1761, 1762, and 1763.

On the establishment of the general peace, in 1763, the *Jersey* returned to England, and was laid up; but in May, 1766, she was again commissioned, and under the command of Captain WILLIAM DICKSON, and bearing the flag of Admiral SPRY, she was ordered to her former station in the Mediterranean, where she remained three years.

In the spring of 1769, bearing the flag of Commodore Sir JOHN BYRON, the commander of that station and Governor of the Colony, the *Jersey* sailed for America; but there is little doubt that she returned home, as was usual in such cases, at the close of the summer, and the active duty of that ship appears to have been brought to a close, at that time.

The *Jersey* remained out of commission from the close of 1769 until 1776, when, without armament, and under the command of Captain W. ANTHONY HALSTEAD, she was ordered to New York as a Hospital-ship.

On Sunday, the seventeenth of May, 1778, Captain HALSTEAD departed this life; and, in July following, he was succeeded in the command of the *Jersey* by Commander DAVID LAIRD, under whom, either as a Hospital or a Prison ship, she remained until the termination of the British authority in New York, when she was abandoned to the fate to which she was justly entitled, and was subsequently overwhelmed in the mud of the Wale bogt, where she remains to this day.

XI.

EXTRACT FROM AN ORATION, PRONOUNCED JULY 4, 1800, IN
THE BAPTIST MEETING-HOUSE IN PROVIDENCE: IT BEING
THE ANNIVERSARY OF AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.

BY JONATHAN RUSSELL, ESQ.

* * * * *

BUT it was not in the ardent conflicts of the field only that our countrymen fell; it was not the ordinary chances of war alone which they had to encounter. Happy, indeed, thrice happy, were WARREN, MONTGOMERY, and MERCER; happy those other gallant spirits who fell with glory in the heat of battle, distinguished by their country, and covered with her applause. Every soul, sensible to honor, envies rather than compassionates their fate. It was in the dungeons of our inhuman invaders; it was in their loathsome and pestiferous Prison-ships, that the wretchedness of our countrymen still makes the heart bleed. It was there that hunger, and thirst, and disease, and all the contumely which cold-hearted cruelty could bestow, sharpened every pang of death. Misery there wrung every fibre that could feel, before she gave the Blow of Grace which sent the sufferer to eternity. It is said that poison was employed. No—there was no such mercy there. There, nothing was employed which could blunt the susceptibility to anguish, or which, by hastening death, could rob its agonies of a single pang. On board one only of these Prison-ships above *eleven thousand* of our brave countrymen are said to have perished. She was called the *Jersey*. Her wreck still remains, and at low ebb presents to the world its accursed and blighted fragments. Twice in twenty-four hours the winds of Heaven sigh through it, and repeat the groans of our expiring countrymen; and twice the ocean hides in her bosom those deadly and polluted ruins, which all her waters cannot purify. Every rain that descends washes from the unconsecrated bank the bones of those intrepid sufferers. They lie naked on the shore, accusing the neglect of their countrymen. How long shall gratitude and even piety deny them burial? They ought to be collected in one

vast ossory, which shall stand a monument to future ages of the two extremes of the human character; of that depravity which, trampling on the rights of misfortune, perpetrated cold and calculating murder on a wretched and defenceless prisoner; and that virtue which animated this prisoner to die a willing martyr for his country. Or rather, were it possible, there ought to be raised a *Colossal Column*, whose base sinking to *Hell*, should let the murderers read their *infamy* inscribed on it; and whose capital of *Corinthian* laurel ascending to *Heaven*, should show the sainted *Patriots* that they have triumphed.

Deep and dreadful as the coloring of this picture may appear, it is but a faint and imperfect sketch of the original. You must remember a thousand unutterable calamities, a thousand instances of domestic as well as national anxiety and distress, which mock description. You ought to remember them; you ought to hand them down in tradition to your posterity, that they may know the awful price their fathers paid for Freedom.

XII.

SONNET.

SUGGESTED BY A VISION OF THE *JERSEY* PRISON-SHIP.

O SEA! in whose unfathomable gloom
 A world forlorn of wreck and ruin lies,
 In thy avenging majesty arise,
 And with a sound as of the trump of doom,
 Whelm from all eyes for aye yon living tomb,
 Wherein the martyr-patriots groaned for years,
 A prey to hunger, and the bitter jeers
 Of foes in whose relentless breast no room
 Was ever found for pity or remorse,
 By haunting anger and a savage hate,
 That spared not e'en their victim's very corse,
 But left it, outcast, to its carrion fate.
 Wherefore, arise, O Sea! and sternly sweep
 This floating dungeon to thy lowest deep!

W. P. P.

XIII.

THE RHODE ISLAND PRISONER.

THE Prison-ship,—a tomb of living men,
Living in death, and longing but to die;
Or ghastlier, the rebel prison-pen,
The foulest spot beneath the patient sky.
Both these have proved undaunted Yankee hearts,
Yet in their sad extremity forlorn,
Kind nature solaced with her tenderest arts
Those faithful souls by wasting torture torn.
For some Rhode Island captive as he lay,
Saw in his sleep, with eager joy elate,
The level shores of Narragansett Bay,
And the plain landscape of his native State,
While his pale, dreaming lips did softly ope,
And murmur low her flag's dear legend, "HOPE."

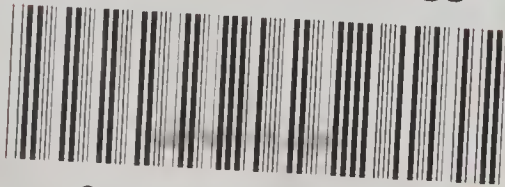
GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS.

22d June, 1865.





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